The Life of St. Francis de Sales

REV. HAROLD BURTON

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Life of St Francis de Sales

St. Francis de Sales.

The Life of St Francis de Sales

Adapted from the
Abbé Hamon's Vie de S François de Sales
By the
REV. HAROLD BURTON

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PREFACE

THIS book was written at the request of the Sisters of the Visitation Convent at Harrow, and they supplied practically all the material necessary for its composition. It is based on the well-known French work *La Vie de Saint François de Sales*, by the Abbé Hamon, and for the most part is a paraphrase of that book. I have followed the same plan and chronological order, though here and there alterations and omissions have been made such as I thought would be suitable for English readers. In certain cases, where M. Hamon gives a digest of the Saint's letters or of the words of his original biographer, Mgr. Charles Auguste de Sales, I have supplied more literal translations from the originals.

I desire to express my indebtedness to the nuns of the Visitation Convent at Harrow and to my brother, Canon Edwin H. Burton, for the help which they have given me, and for the unfailing kindness with which that help was extended.

I had hoped to bring out both volumes of the Life together, but, owing to the increase of other work, I have less time at my disposal, and it was thought better to give this first volume at once to the public. It deals with the Saint's early days, his labours in Chablais, and the first years of his episcopate; the second volume will describe the foundation of the Visitation Order and the closing years of St Francis's life.

H. B.

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Life of St Francis de Sales

CHAPTER I*

(1567–1574)

Introduction—The Saint's parents—His birth and baptism—Home education—Early characteristics

ST FRANCIS DE SALES was one of the many remarkable and saintly men who were given to the Church by Divine Providence at the time of her great need during the years of the so-called Reformation and during the period immediately following it. He is the only "Doctor of the Church" of those times: and when we consider the virtue and intellectual powers of the innumerable theologians who were his contemporaries, this comparison alone should serve to give us a high idea of his worth, and should reveal him to us as one of the greatest men of his day.

He belongs, strictly speaking, to that period of Church history which is often spoken of as the Counter-Reformation. The Council of Trent, held in the midst of most troubled times and in spite of every kind of opposition, was beginning to make its influence felt in the everyday life of Christians and in the general functioning of the Catholic Church. The abuses which had had a share in the genesis of the Protestant Reformation were already being suppressed; favouritism in the papal court, worldliness, and failure of residence amongst the bishops, ignorance on the part of the clergy, lack of spirituality and non-observance of rule in some of the ancient religious Orders, were receiving the correctives which had become so necessary. Doubtless, the description of these abuses has in some cases been exaggerated, but one has only to read the chronicles of the Church and the lives of the saints, dealing with this period and written by Catholic historians, to realize the pressing need of many changes.

For the purpose of this reform God raised up a wonderful army of mighty intellects and zealous saints. Even those who have no great appreciation of the ideals of Catholic sanctity should surely be obliged to admire the high intellectual power, the self-sacrificing virtue, and the astounding zeal of these sons of the Church, and to confess that the existence of such numbers of remarkable men, serving the cause of Catholicity at one particular period in every part of the world, was in itself an amazing phenomenon. To St Ignatius Loyola and the heroic band of eminent men who were carrying on his work must, it seems to me, be assigned a preponderating merit in the abour of reform. But they were not by any means alone. From the houses of other religious institutions, and from the ranks of the secular clergy, came forth many who, as writers, preachers, bishops, and martyrs, accomplished a noble and enduring work. Amongst so many who deserve mention it seems invidious to instance a few, yet there are names which come, as it were, of themselves to the mind—St Pius V, St Charles Borromeo, St Teresa, St John of the Cross, St Philip Neri, St Andrew Avellino, St Peter Canisius, B. Robert Bellarmine, B. Juvenal Ancina, St Jane Frances de Chantal, St Vincent de Paul, and St Francis Borgia. Along with the Jesuits, the Capuchin fathers did notable work in restoring Catholicity among the people, as those who read this book will see, when they follow the acts of our Saint and his fellow-workers: and to English minds must also, of necessity, come the memory of Cardinal Allen and of the noble band of martyrs who laid down their lives for the faith in this country. At the same time, in other parts of the world, in Asia, Africa, and the Americas, heroic missionaries were carrying on the work of the apostolate in the midst of every kind of danger, and the achievements of St Francis Xavier in Asia and of St Louis Bertrand in America are stories of noble conquest unstained by the lust for gold or the shedding of blood.

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* Hamon, l. i, chap. 1.

Many other labourers there were whose names have not been raised to the altars of the Church, but whose work as writers, preachers, controversialists, and theologians, has gained for them a world-wide and lasting reputation—men such as Suarez, Maldonatus, Baronius, Possevin, Petavius, Louis of Granada, and Du Perron. Truly, to obtain distinction, either for sanctity, intellect, eloquence or zeal, amongst such as these was to give proof of signal merit indeed.

But the genius of Francis was equal to the test. He was veritably a great man—greater in some things than in others, but great in all. As a controversialist he was so powerful that his opponents at length refused to meet him, and the leaders of Calvinism warned their followers against his seductiveness; as an ascetical writer for those living in the world he has had no peer these three centuries past, and much of the best that has since been written is based upon his work; as a theologian he was so well known in his day that the Pope consulted him upon the burning questions of the times; as a converter of souls and a corrector of abuses he earned the testimony of Du Perron for the one and the evidence of fair order in his diocese for the other; as a preacher he was approved by the size of the crowds that ever surrounded his pulpit and by the number and permanence of the moral conversions he effected; and as a Saint he has received the Church's infallible seal in the canonization of his name. To crown all this, with all his rigidly orthodox learning, with all his earnest eloquence, with all his burning zeal, with all his natural ardour and intensity of character, he has come down to posterity with the title of the "Gentle Saint." Strength and gentleness—the most perfect and most rare of all alloys.

Particularly notable is the approval given to the life and writings of St Francis de Sales by the Sovereign Pontiffs. Alexander VII declared him to be "celebrated in doctrine, admirable in sanctity, the remedy and protection of his age against heresies"; Clement IX said that "by his magnificent works he made a pious armoury for the benefit of souls"; Benedict XIV asserted that his books were written with "science divinely acquired" and called him "the most wise director of souls"; Pius IX testified that "the Saint's books, written in the gentle style of his loving charity, have produced most abundant fruits of piety throughout the whole Christian society"; and finally, Pius XI in his recent encyclical letter points out that as a particular glory of Francis de Sales he "was given by God to the Church for a particular purpose—to deny, that is, the prejudice planted in many persons, and not yet extirpated, that true sanctity, such as the Church purposes, cannot be obtained, or at least that it is so difficult of attainment that one must surpass the common standard of the faithful; that it is reached only by a few magnanimous souls; and that, moreover, it appears to be surrounded by so many troubles as to be impossible of adoption by those outside the cloister." In celebration of the tercentenary of the Saint's death the reigning Pontiff furthermore bestowed upon him a new title and a new work for him to perform for the benefit of the Church militant. "We should wish," says the Holy Father, "that from these solemn celebrations advantage should be derived by all those Catholics who, through the publication either of journals or of other writings, promote and defend the Christian doctrine. For them it is necessary in discussions to imitate and maintain that vigour, joined with moderation and charity, which is the peculiar characteristic of Francis. In fact, by his example he teaches them clearly what conduct to observe. . . . Since, therefore, it has not been ascertained that to the Catholic writers whom We have mentioned De Sales has been given as patron in any public and solemn document of the Apostolic See, We seize this happy occasion with certainty and with mature deliberation, and of Our Apostolic authority We give and confirm and declare through this Encyclical Letter St Francis de Sales, Bishop of Geneva and Doctor of the Church, to be the heavenly patron of all those mentioned, anything to the contrary notwithstanding."

St Francis de Sales thus becomes the patron of those to whom in these days we owe so much, and who, in the midst of many trials and restrictions, carry on so difficult a task—the journalists and controversial writers of the Catholic press. In this way the Saint will continue the work which he began as a pamphleteer in the days of his apostleship in Chablais.

Before entering upon the narration of the life of St Francis de Sales, it is first necessary to give a brief indication of the events which had taken place during the half-century prior to the date of his birth.

The ancient diocese of Geneva, in which the greatest part of the Saint's life was passed and over which he ruled as bishop, included the districts of Vaud, Gex, Valromey, Genevois, Faucigny, Chablais, Gaillard and Ternier—a large area of mountainous territory lying around the southern shores of the lake of Geneva.

Many years, however, before the birth of Francis de Sales, the Bishop of Geneva had been driven from his diocesan city by the political and religious upheaval of the so-called Reformation. This was in 1534. Hitherto Geneva, like the greater part of the diocese, had belonged to the dukes of Savoy: but at this time an alliance was formed between Berne and Geneva for the purpose of effecting the independence of the latter against Duke Charles III. Owing mainly to a series of misfortunes which befell Savoy during this period, the object of the alliance was achieved, and Geneva obtained its freedom. Unfortunately for religion, there was also at this time a conflict of authority between the Bishop and the citizens, who were becoming more and more imbued with the revolutionary and anti-Catholic notions of the new religion. In a moment of anger and discouragement "the Bishop left the city and pronounced sentence of excommunication against its inhabitants. This was the signal for a general movement against the old faith. Altars were pulled down and demolished, paintings and statues destroyed, and of those who continued faithful to the religion of their fathers some were imprisoned and others sent into exile."* In 1536 Calvin arrived in the city for his first period of influence.

This was an evil time for the duchy of Savoy. In 1536, while the Swiss were taking possession of Chablais along the southern shore of the lake of Geneva, Duke Charles III was driven out of Savoy by Francis I of France; and by the truce of Nice, in 1538, he was only allowed to hold Cuneo, Asti, and Vercelli. His son, Emmanuel Philibert, however, retrieved the fortunes of his house, and, partly by arms, partly by alliance, gained back the territory lost to France. This was in the year 1559. In 1564 he also recovered Chablais, but under the conditions of the Treaty of Lausanne, which settled this particular point, he gave up his claim to Geneva and Vaud.

The Bishops of the diocese, after leaving the city of Geneva, eventually settled in the town of Annecy, which was the capital of Genevois. Genevois was a duchy within a duchy, and in many ways was self-governing: during the Saint's life it was ruled by one who bore the double title of Nemours and Genevois, a prince who paid homage to France for one of his possessions, and to Savoy for the other. This, as we shall see, placed him in a peculiar position when France and Savoy came to war.

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* Alzog (English translation), § 321, p. 284, vol. iii.

As to the society in which the Saint was to pass his early days, it is well described by M. Hamon in the first chapter of his classical work. Its intellectual and moral atmosphere was that of the nobility of Savoy at the end of the sixteenth century. "As might be imagined, this aristocracy of a small state, enclosed between France, Italy, and Switzerland, had received the impression of varied influences from all of these three countries. The noblemen of Savoy were very well informed as to all that was happening in France: sometimes as allies, sometimes as enemies, of the kings of France, they had an intimate knowledge of the affairs, intrigues and literature of that country. They spoke its language fluently: a number of them wrote it to perfection. By means of its possession of Piedmont the House of Savoy had already contracted close relations with the states of Italy. The whole of that complicated movement of ideas and aspirations which is known as the Renaissance had made its influence felt throughout the duchy. It had modified the studies of the colleges and had altered the ancient habits of many of the châteaux.

"Finally, the Protestant revolt had deeply moved and shaken the whole society of the country. The Bernese had invaded Chablais and had held it for a considerable time; even though they had been forced to give way before the armies of the dukes of Savoy, they had left heresy behind them in triumphant possession. For these noblemen of the country which stretches from La Roche-sur-Foron to Annecy Protestantism was an urgent, evident, and familiar question—a question that had been thrashed out amongst them for forty years. This nobility, allied to the family of Sales, possessed estates in the midst of heretical territory, and numbered both relatives and friends amongst those who had revolted from the ancient faith. Even at the very earliest age the children were well versed in the current religious disputes, and knew thoroughly the story of the sanguinary wars resulting therefrom.

"The beautiful country which surrounds the village of Thorens is well known to those travellers who have passed along the road from Annecy to La Roche-sur-Foron. It is one of those countries, numerous enough in Savoy, which reveal at one and the same time the wild, stern beauty of the mountains and the gentle charm of the fertile vales. Thorens is dominated on the east by the mountains of Parmelan and Soudine: while its two châteaux are situated on the right bank of the torrent of the Fillière, issuing from the valley of Usillon. In the sixteenth century the valley was still covered with woods. It still preserved its wildness: chamois, wolf, and bear wandered amongst its forests, while the eagle and other birds of prey hovered over the lofty crests of the age-old trees.

"To the west of the village extends a fair valley, the sides ot which slope down towards the torrent of the Fier and the lake of Annecy, and display all the rich beauty of a most fertile country. When the Bishop of Geneva was one day to compose works so full of illustrations borrowed from nature, he had no need to undergo the labour of research: he had but to call to his mind the varied and beautiful scenes which had lain before his eyes in his childhood days."

St Francis de Sales was the eldest son of François de Sales, Lord of Nouvelles, and of Françoise de Sionnas, the daughter of Melchior de Sionnas, Lord of La Thuille, Vallières and Boisy.

The Saint's father came of an ancient family of Savoy, well known in the historical annals of the duchy. He himself had had a distinguished career. He was born in 1522. After his first education, he became page to Prince Francis of Luxemburg. He next enlisted as volunteer in a French cavalry regiment, commanded by the Duc d'Etampes, and soon obtained the rank of officer. He distinguished himself on several occasions both in France and Flanders, particularly at the siege of Landrecies and St Didier. Later on he was called to the court of France by the Duke of Nemours, who employed him on several important missions and embassies. He took a share in the negotiations leading to the treaty of peace at Cateau-Cambresis between Henry II of France and Philip II of Spain in 1559. It was this treaty which gave back to Emmanuel Philibert, Duke of Savoy, that part of his states which had been seized by France.

It must have been soon after this that M. de Sales returned to his own home, the château of that name, situated in the neighbourhood of Thorens, in the country of Genevois, for on May 12, 1560, we find him betrothed to Françoise de Sionnas, who was then a child of eight years. When exactly the marriage took place it is difficult to ascertain, but there is reason to think that it was during the course of the year 1566. M. de Sales was at this time thirty-eight years old, and his young wife not more than fourteen. The latter was, as has been said, the daughter of Melchior de Sionnas, Lord of La Thuille, Vallières and Boisy and of Bonaventure de Chevron-Villette. The family of Sionnas was also of old and well-known stock; and it is through his mother that the Saint's biographers trace back his descent to no less a person that Charlemagne. As dowry, Mlle. de Sionnas brought to her husband the rich lordship of Boisy, with the condition, however, that on the occasion of his marriage he should assume that name. It was therefore under the title of M. de Boisy that he was henceforth known.

According to the testimony of his friends and from what we know of him in the early life of his son, M. de Boisy was of an admirable character. He was possessed of a clear-sighted mind, a sound judgement and great courage. Once he had formed a deliberate opinion, it was not easy to make him alter his decision. Nevertheless, as we shall see in the life of his son, he was never too proud to yield to reasonable persuasion. Although eloquent when the occasion needed it, and an accomplished courtier, he disliked all arrogance and display. Temperate in his speech and in his manner of living, economical with regard to his own person, he was liberal to those around him, just and equitable to his dependents, and very generous to the poor. He was particularly kind to the small farmers, helping them in times of distress with loans of corn and money, for which he always refused to receive interest. His neighbours had so high an opinion of his justice and judgement, that he was often asked to arbitrate in cases of dispute, which he would settle to the satisfaction of all parties. He was a strong Catholic, regular and devout in his religious duties, going to confession and communion at least once a month, which in those days was considered frequent for a layman. His hatred of heresy in general, and of Calvinistic protestantism in particular, was intense. He had seen its rise, its history and its results, and he could never understand how anyone could abandon the firm tradition of the ancient Faith for the ever-changing novelties of the new. He was always very loyal to the Pope, and used to say that the Holy Father was the greatest majesty in the world, who ought to be obeyed as the lieutenant of God.

Of the character of Mme. de Boisy we shall also get many glimpses in these pages. But we have in addition the evidence of her friends and acquaintance. St Jane Frances de Chantal, who knew her personally in later years, gave the following testimony to her character: "She was one of the most estimable ladies known to me at that time, generous and noble of soul, pure, innocent, and holy, the veritable mother and nurse of the poor. She was modest, humble, and full of goodness to all sorts of persons, maintaining an atmosphere of peace in her own household, ruling her family wisely, and taking the greatest care that it should live in the fear of God. She herself received the sacraments frequently."* For her husband, we are told, she was full of regard and delicate attention, striving to please him in all things, yet expressing her own point of view to him with persuasiveness and tact. She took particular care of the spiritual welfare of her servants. Whenever it was possible, she would read to them after dinner from some devotional book, and would gather them round her in the evening for night prayers. Her generosity to the poor was practical and self-sacrificing: not content with giving them alms at her own doorstep, she would make herself acquainted with their needs, visit them in their homes, and nurse them in times of sickness. She would even dress their sores and ulcers with her own hands. Sometimes she was so engrossed in these visits that she would forget her meals: it was on one of such occasions that, when someone suggested to M. de Boisy to send for her, he replied characteristically: "Let her be; she is doing the work of God." It would seem that eventually Mme. de Boisy acquired a considerable reputation for her skill in tending the sick, for we are told that "not only the poor but others also had recourse to her in their maladies."*

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* Deposition, first point. See also *Depositions of St Jane Francis de Chantal*, published by Burns Oates and Washbourne in their Library of St Francis de Sales.

An interesting picture of M. de Boisy and his young wife is afforded by the deposition of Mauris Garbillon during the process of their son's canonization.

"In the year of the great famine they fed more than five hundred poor each day. Having given all the corn that they could, they distributed money. They assembled the people in the courtyard, and made them go out in order. During the waiting the parents (M. and Mme. de Boisy) would watch the people with smiling faces, speak to them affectionately, and often give them useful counsel. But for them many would have died both at Thorens and in the neighbourhood."

In the midsummer of 1566 James of Savoy, Duke of Nemours and Genevois, accompanied by his newly-married wife, Anne d'Este, made his solemn entry into Annecy, which was the capital of his second duchy. With them came the Cardinals de Lorraine and de Guise. The occasion demanded the presence of M. de Boisy at Annecy, both because his lands lay in the duchy, and because he was captain, or military chief, of the town; and it was only to be expected that he would take his young wife with him to present her at the court. Owing to the past services of her husband, as well as to her own merits and rank, Mme. de Boisy was received by the Duke and his consort with every mark of favour and esteem.

In the meanwhile the Duke of Savoy, at the request of the Duchess of Nemours, had allowed the well-known relic of the Sacred Shroud, which was then guarded at Chambéry, to be transferred temporarily from that town to Annecy; and it was solemnly exposed for public veneration in the church of Notre Dame on July 17. On the following Sunday, July 21, Mme. de Boisy, visiting the relic exposed upon the rood-screen, remained before it for a long time in prayer. Then, as the biographers remind us, in imitation of Anne, the mother of Samuel, she begged our Lord to grant that she might bear a son, and she promised that, should she obtain her prayer, she would entirely devote herself to forming him for the service of God, and would only see in him a sacred trust confided to her by Jesus Christ and belonging solely and entirely to our Lord. At the conclusion of her prayer her soul was filled with the greatest spiritual consolation, and she returned to her home bearing within her a spirit of deep peace and of confidence in God.

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* Deposition of Michel Favre.

In the course of time she became aware that her petition was likely to be fulfilled. She immediately renewed the offering which she had made in the church of Notre Dame at Annecy, and during the following months prepared herself for the event with a strong realization of her future responsibility. On the feast of the Assumption, 1567, she went to confession and communion, and continually occupied herself during the octave with prayer and works of charity. On Thursday, August 21, between nine and ten o'clock in the evening, in a room that was called after St Francis of Assisi, the child was born. Inasmuch as the birth had been premature, it had not been without great danger to the young mother, yet, while all around her were in the gravest anxiety, she herself never lost the calmness of her confidence in God.

The child, however, was so small and delicate, that it was thought necessary to have him baptized at once, and on the day after his birth he was carried in his cradle to the parish church of St Maurice at Thorens and christened under the names of Francis Bonaventure. His godfather was a monk of the order of St Benedict, Dom François de la Fléchère, prior of the monastery of Sillingy, and his godmother was Mme. de Boisy's mother, who then bore the name of Mme. de Monthoux. Several of those who assisted at this baptism seem to have had premonitions of the future. Years afterwards Dom François de la Fléchère told St Jane Frances de Chantal that, while holding the child over the font, he had felt a consolation impossible to describe, and there was impressed upon his mind the thought that Francis would never lose his baptismal innocence (Dep. Mère de Chaugy). Baron de Lucinge, who was also present, advised M. de Boisy to pray God for the gift of other children, if he wished to perpetuate his family, for this one bore such visible marks of grace as to make it evident that he was born for the service of God and the Church. Similar sentiments were expressed by other members of the company. The birth and christening of the first-born were made the occasion of great rejoicing. Friends and neighbours gathered from all around to congratulate the parents. We are told by Charles Auguste de Sales that "on the return from the church the Seigneur de Sales gave a magnificent banquet to the noble company which had honoured the baptism of his son, and ordered alms to be given to all comers at the gate of the château from daybreak to the fall of night."*

The months that followed the child's baptism were, however, months of anxiety. Owing to the conditions of his birth, he was at first very small and delicate. He seemed so tender and sensitive, that he could scarcely bear to be touched, and it was found necessary to cradle him in cotton-wool and silk. Nevertheless, such was the care lavished upon him by his mother and Mme. de Monthoux that, though the doctors had held out little hope of his life, he passed safely through this dangerous time and eventually developed into a strong and sturdy child.

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* C. A. de S., l. i, p. 3.

It is sometimes difficult, in the case of the lives of the saints, to credit everything that is related of their early childhood: certain types of pious souls delight in magnifying into miracles of predestination what are often quite natural actions, common to many children. Be this as it may, one cannot pass over in silence all the things that are related of Francis in his early years. There are some souls whom God, without forcing the will, has predestined, and Francis was of these. When very young, before reason had apparently dawned within his mind, he always seemed particularly contented when taken to church, and he would sit quietly in his place with his eyes fixed upon the altar or upon the priest who was officiating. In a similar manner he gave early evidence of that spirit of generosity to the poor which he inherited, as it were, from his parents, and which was one of his life-long characteristics. If, when he was taken out by his nurse, they came across any of the poor, especially should they be children, he was never satisfied unless he was allowed to bestow some small gift upon them, or unless she performed this duty for him, and she was always obliged to take with her a supply of such little presents as would serve the child's generosity.

In due course, on October 21, 1569, when Francis was two years and three months old, he was taken away from the care of his nurse. On this occasion, which fell on the feast of the Presentation of our Lady, his mother had him taken to the church, in order that he might be blessed by the priest and the usual prayers offered in his behalf. In addition to this, Mme. de Boisy had several Masses said for him, and, according to her usual custom, distributed special alms to the poor at the doors of the château.

It was soon after this that Francis's education began in earnest. The greatest precautions were first of all taken to guard him from everything that might do him harm. He was kept away from any children whose company was not likely to be good for him; indeed, so much care was taken on this point that later on, when he was capable of long walks, he was forbidden to go on such expeditions alone, for fear of the risk of his making unsuitable acquaintances. Neither was he allowed to enter the kitchen nor to have frequent communications with the servants or farm labourers, lest among these there might be some who would exert an evil influence upon him. He was also denied all games of mere chance, such as dice and certain games of cards, and only those amusements were permitted which would train his mind and exercise his body in a good and healthy manner. Moreover, all those little indulgences, which had at first been necessitated by the delicacy of his health, were gradually suppressed, and his life was modelled upon somewhat Spartan lines, simple, without luxury or softness, either in the matter of food, clothes or surroundings. He was taught to be contented with little, to do without comfort, and to endure willingly hardship, sacrifice, and pain, whenever these were at all necessary.

Nor was a certain severity of punishment wanting on occasion. It happened one day that a carpenter, employed in the château, had left his doublet upon a work-bench, while he was engaged elsewhere, and that in this doublet was fastened a pretty aglet, worked with different coloured silks. The boy, passing by, was attracted by the brightness of this little ornament, and, under the influence of a sudden childish temptation, unfastened it and made it his own. The workman, on returning, noticed his loss, and at once instituted a search among the other servants. The matter came to the ears of M. de Boisy, who for some reason or other bethought him of asking his son if he was the one who had taken the missing object. Francis immediately confessed his fault, and, falling on his knees, begged with tears for forgiveness. His father, though he knew the boy's sorrow to be sincere, decided that he should be taught a lesson, and, in the presence of the whole household, gave him a sound flogging. He then told Francis that, because it was his first offence and because he had confessed the theft, he had been dealt with lightly, but that if he committed such a fault again, he would be treated with much greater severity.

St Francis used also to tell of another little escapade of these childish days. One day, when the boy was passing by the kitchen, which, we have seen, he was forbidden to enter, he saw the cook drawing some pastries out of the oven. The temptation was too strong: he slipped into the kitchen, and asked the cook to give him one. The latter, out of mischief, put one of the hot pastries in his hand. The boy, though badly burned, managed to hold on to his prize, which he eventually consumed. Then he went off to his mother, to have the burn dressed; and we are told that, both for his own sake and that of the cook, he succeeded in keeping from her the cause of the damage. It is probable that Mme. de Boisy was one of those mothers who know when it is advisable not to ask too many questions: she may have thought, moreover, that if any punishment had been necessary, the burn itself was sufficient retribution.

The boy's parents knew, however, that external correction is of little avail unless it is helped by the strong principles and supernatural aid of religion His spiritual education, therefore, was begun at the earliest. As soon as he could speak, he was taught the ordinary prayers in use among Catholics—the *Our Father*, *Hail Mary*, *Creed*, etc.—and these were followed by the first notions of Christian Doctrine. For this purpose his parents obtained the services of M. Jean Déage, an excellent priest, "chosen from among the most prudent and learned scholars whom they could find."* Acting in concert, Mme. de Boisy and M. Déage began to teach the boy his catechism. Francis proved himself an excellent pupil. It seemed to be his greatest pleasure to learn what he could about God and religion. He listened attentively, even with a certain eagerness, to those who taught him, exercising his mind upon what he learned, and constantly asking questions about the mysteries of the faith. Urged on by his own good will and blessed with a particularly retentive memory, he made rapid progress.

The need which he ever used to feel in after years of communicating himself to others showed itself already in these early days. At the end of a lesson, as soon as he knew a certain number of the catechetical questions and answers, he would run outside and gather together the children of the neighbourhood by means of a little bell, which had been given to him for his amusement. Arranging his companions around him, he would teach them in their turn the lesson he had just received himself, making them repeat it in short sentences, until they had learned it thoroughly. When he was scarcely five years old, he even tried his knowledge upon a Calvinist gentleman, who was on a visit to the château, quoting to him the words of the catechism, in order to convince him of the depths of his error. It was consequently found necessary in the future to shut the child up in his room, when members of the new religion came to the house, in order to protect them and his parents from the awkward consequences of this youthful zeal.

As the boy grew older, he received a deeper and more detailed explanation of the catechism and of the ordinary moral principles. His mother not only told him what he ought to believe, but explained to him, as far as possible, the motives of belief: she not only told him what he had to do and what to avoid, but in each case gave him the reason for such injunctions. She strove especially to give to his religion a vivifying soul, as it were, by making him see that the ultimate foundation of its teaching and its practice was the filial fear and love of God.

The results of this training were soon evident. The boy grew up genuinely truthful and obedient, religious in the best sense, sacrificing his own desires promptly to the will of others, and always very generous. His love of helping the poor became especially marked. To grant him the means of bestowing an alms was one of the surest ways of giving him pleasure: if any of the poor called during mealtimes, he would leave the table, carrying with him his own share of food, that he might give it to the hungry. He was not remarkably fond of games, but spent much of his recreation in building up little altars, before which he would spend his time in saying the prayers he had been taught. Nevertheless, when his parents or tutor, mindful of his health, bade him go and play with other children, he would do so at once, entering into the game with all the zest which was natural to his character. When the game was over, he would take his companions to his little oratories, there to say a few prayers together, or perhaps would lead them to the parish church. One cannot help remarking the precocity of mind that was displayed on these occasions. He would arrange the children round the baptismal font and say to them: "This is the spot that ought to be dearest to us of all, for it was here that we were made children of God. Let us sing together the *Gloria Patri.*" And, after singing the doxology, they would each in turn, under his direction, kiss the font. At other times they would form little processions round the church, chanting the Apostles' Creed, or would go to the altar of the Blessed Sacrament, to visit our Lord in his earthly home.

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* Dep. Anthoine Bouvard.

All this was saved from the danger of play-acting and priggishness by the genuineness which underlay it and by the modesty with which all his actions were performed. It is not likely that otherwise he would have obtained such ascendancy over his companions as to make them join in these devotions, for children are quick and sure judges of insincerity, especially among themselves.

His goodness, as we have already seen, was not without its temptations: it was hall-marked by trial and was the result of continual effort on his part. All through his life we shall find him distinguished by his gentleness: yet he had not the fault of timidity, which is not unfrequently found in some persons to be the defect of this quality. He was brave with a certain measured and calm courage. That this courage was not gained without an effort we learn from what he afterwards wrote to a religious who had consulted him. "You tell me you are afraid of evil spirits. . . . I myself, when I was young, was afflicted by this same fancy; and, in order to get rid of it, I forced myself little by little to go alone, my heart armed with confidence in God, to places where my imagination threatened me with fear; and by this means I at last became so strengthened that the darkness and loneliness of night have become a delight to me, on account of the all-pervading presence of God, which we experience more completely in such a solitude."* It was in thus fighting his own inclinations that the boy had acquired not merely an appearance of goodness but its manifest reality, and it was this genuineness that gained for him the childish respect of his little companions.

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* Letter to a Religious (September 9, 1619), E.N., Tom. XIX, Lettre 1549, p. 13.

The best testimony, however, to all this was his father's opinion of him. M. de Boisy, for all his goodness, was an experienced man of the world, a virile character, trained in the hard school of war and danger: he was not likely to look with favour on anything in his son that savoured of suspicious piety or of a false religious sentimentality. Yet he was so struck by Francis's character and conduct that he said to his wife: "Really, it seems to me that this child is a son rather of grace than of nature. I am persuaded by a certain presentiment that God has great designs in store for him. For his modesty and goodness arouse in me myself the keenest desire for the practice of virtue."

It need scarcely be said that Mme. de Boisy was of the same opinion. One cannot help feeling that she herself was a saint, and it is probable that her spiritual insight and maternal instinct gave her all along an even clearer view of the boy's future than that possessed by her husband. She probably saw that M. de Boisy would one day have to make a great sacrifice in the person of his son, a sacrifice the idea of which did not enter his head for some time, in spite of the warning words of Baron de Lucinge. For the moment she was prudent and reserved about it, but we know her opinion of Francis at that time by what she told St Jane Frances de Chantal many years after. "If I was not the mother of that dear son, I could tell you many wonderful things of his infancy. . . . I often remarked that, even as a child, he was especially protected by the blessings of heaven and that he breathed naught but the love of God. He never gave me any dissatisfaction, but was always my consolation; and I never noticed in him any defect. I have always looked upon him as a saint, whose mother I esteemed myself unworthy to be."*

Even in these early days Francis had the power of helping his mother in the little trials of everyday life. If he saw her upset about anything, he would say to her: "Let us ask God about it, dear mother; he will help us." And when, in the midst of some worry, she was heard to exclaim, "God help us!" he rejoined: "Ah, that was well said, dear mother. Let us say it often, but say it from the depths of our hearts, and you will see that God will aid us."†

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* Dep. Mère de Chaugy.

† Dep. François Favre.

CHAPTER II*

(1574–1581)

School days at La Roche and Annecy

FRANCIS was first sent to school in 1574, when he was seven years old. Even before he was able to read, he had shown a great liking for books, loving to turn the pages over and trying to puzzle out the letters. On one occasion, when his nurse came to visit him, he begged her to ask his parents to et him go to school, so that he might begin to learn. She tried to lissuade him from the idea by representing to him all that he would ave to endure both from his masters and the other boys, but he emained undaunted by her eloquence and persisted in his request. he at length consented, but asked him, in joke, what he would give er as a reward. The child, taking her seriously, answered: "I have othing to give you now, because I am so small, but when I am grown p and am my own master, I will have a beautiful dress of red ratteen ade for you every year."[†]

M. de Boisy, seeing the child so eager, decided to send him to a ollege, recently founded in the little town of La Roche, about three eagues distant from the château of Sales. It was to this college hat M. Louis de Sales, Sgr. de Brens, the brother of M. de Boisy, ad already sent his three sons, Amed, Louis and Gaspard. It ppears that at first Mme. de Boisy was opposed to her son's departure rom the château, both on the score of his health and of the fear hich haunted her so continually of his being thrown among bad ompanions: she would have preferred that he should receive his rst education at home under her own supervision. Nevertheless er husband overruled her objections, and the boy was sent to a Roche, to the house of M. Dumax, who was apparently headmaster f the college. M. de Boisy, however, spared no pains in the matter f precaution, and placed the boy under the particular care of a edagogue, Pierre Batailleur, who was to keep a constant eye upon im in his new life.[‡] The boy's father also would visit him regularly see what progress he was making, and from time to time, as a special

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[*] Hamon, l. i, chap. 2.

[†] *Recueil de la Mère Greffier*, p. 8. Ratteen is "a thick woollen stuff illed or twilled."

[‡] This is according to Charles Auguste. Hamon makes M. Déage his edagogue, while one of the witnesses at the process of canonization, Jehan happus, affirms that Francis had no particular pedagogue at La Roche.

reward for his diligence, would take him back to dine at the château, or even to spend a few days at home with his mother. At this first school, during the two years that he remained there, Francis learned to read and write, was grounded in French grammar, and even began the study of Latin.

In the meanwhile political events were moving in such a way as to make it advisable for M. de Boisy to leave Sales for a time and take up his residence with his brother at Brens, in Chablais. It would appear that he had incurred the disfavour of the Duke of Nemours, by refusing to help him in certain designs against Geneva, designs known to be contrary to the wishes of their overlord, the Duke of Savoy.

The great advantage of La Roche had been that M. de Boisy was able to visit his son easily during his first years of education away from home: this advantage was gone, and the boy was now ripe for a more important school. As M. Louis de Sales was sending his three sons to a college at Annecy, it was decided that Francis should join his cousins there under the care of M. Déage, who went with them as guardian, or tutor. The college to which they were sent has a certain interest for students of English history, as it had been founded, in 1549, by Eustache Chappuis, Canon of the cathedral of Geneva, who had been for many years ambassador of Charles V at the court of Henry VIII.

In his new school Francis made rapid yet sure progress. "He was so diligent and employed his mind so well that he soon outstripped all his companions: for he was urged on by a great eagerness to learn. When he began to turn French into Latin, it was noticed that he would sometimes remain a whole hour in composing four or five sentences: nor was he ever wearied with long lessons. It was his custom to make a collection in his notebook of all the finest passages that he read or heard spoken, of choice words or of flowers of eloquence, in order to make use of them on some fitting occasion either in speaking or writing."* We are also told by Charles Auguste de Sales that his masters would choose him especially for recitations, for which he showed a particular aptitude, being possessed of a fine voice and a graceful action. From the several descriptions that we have of him at this time it is evident that he was unlike the ordinary boy in his manners and tastes. He bore himself with a certain sedateness and dignity, was neat in his dress and appearance, and was not over fond of games. Here, as at Sales and La Roche, the religious tendency of his nature showed itself prominently. He still possessed his habit of building altars or oratories, where he would spend a considerable time in prayer, and he still kept his strange power of persuading his young companions to join him in his devotions. Yet all these

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* C. A., l. i, p. 6.

hings—his little dignity, his diligence, his piety—were so much the
rue expression of himself that, though so different from other boys,
e always commanded their respect: it was all so genuine. “ Both
nasters and scholars admired his diligence at his studies, and still
nore his modesty, piety, and singular devotion.”* Moreover, his
ourage, as we have already seen, was beyond denial. Several times he
ffered to take on himself the punishment of others, and this punish-
nent was often a whipping. That this was not a vain offer, altogether
nlikely to be accepted by the master, is shown by what actually
appened on one occasion. His cousin Gaspard, who seems to have
een a budding naturalist, “ neglected his lessons for the sake of some
ittle birds which he kept in a cage, and for this he was often flogged.”†
t one of these crises, however, the boy's courage deserted him, and
e cried so hard before receiving his punishment that Francis begged
o be allowed to take the flogging for him. To this the master,
exed at such an interruption, agreed, and apparently administered
he dose without any dilution, so much so that afterwards the other
oys spoke very bitterly against him. Francis, however, defended
im, remarking with justice that the master had done nothing
nore than he had been asked to do.

It was the same courage that led Francis, when he thought it
ecessary, to protest against the language or conduct of his com-
anions. Considering the average boy nature, it cannot be supposed
hat this was always a successful proceeding, and the young mentor
ust have occasionally received rebuffs. But we have the evidence
f witnesses that in this, as in his exercises of piety, he possessed an
xtraordinary influence, and in after years several of his companions
dmitted that they had been kept from evil courses in their school
ays by the counsel and correction which Francis had given to them.

He made his first communion on December 17, 1577, in the
hurch of the Dominicans at Annecy. He was now ten years old, and
lthough in those days this was considered young for such a privilege,
et his character and conduct were such as to warrant an exception
his case. On the same day he received the sacrament of Confirma-
on at the hands of Ange Justiniani, Bishop of Geneva. This
relate was already acquainted with the boy, and took occasion during
e ceremony to speak to him with words of kindness and encourage-
ent for the future. To those around him the Bishop foretold that
is youth would one day become a great man and the wonder of his
mes.

Many years afterwards the Saint, become himself Bishop of Geneva,
as preaching in this church of the Dominicans on the subject of
ith, it being the feast of St Thomas: the sacristan, a religious named
ather Blanc, accompanying him home after the sermon, said to him:

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* Dep. Pierre Critain.

† Dep. Michel Favre.

"My Lord, I have never heard anyone speak so well of our holy faith." To which the Bishop answered: "My friend, I remembered that in your church I was confirmed and strengthened: it was this memory that somewhat moved me."*

Nine months after his first communion and confirmation Francis took another important step in his spiritual career. After receiving these sacraments, he had devoted himself still more diligently to prayer, work and spiritual reading. The idea of consecrating himself entirely to the service of God, which must have been slowly developing in his mind, now took more definite form. It came to his ears that Mgr. Gallois Regard, Bishop of Bagneray, in the absence of Bishop Justiniani, was about to hold an ordination in the church of St Etienne at Clermont, in Genevois. Francis went to his father, told him of his desires, and asked permission to receive the tonsure. M. de Boisy consented, though it is not easy to understand what was in his mind when he did so, for it is quite certain that he ultimately destined his son for a career in the civil magistracy. Be that as it may, Francis gladly took advantage of the permission granted to him, obtained dimissorial letters from the Vicar-General of the diocese, set out for Clermont, and received the tonsure on September 20, 1578, being then eleven years old. We are told that the ceremony opened his eyes to a little defect of vanity in his character of which hitherto he had scarcely been aware. He could not, of course, be tonsured without sacrificing his hair, which, in accordance with the custom of his time, had been allowed to grow long, falling down upon his shoulders. The thought of this sacrifice caused him at first some little repugnance, and there was something of a struggle within him before he eventually made it with his usual courage and obedience. It may be noticed here that Francis did not at once assume the clerical dress, for this was not the custom of the time in such cases. He continued, therefore, to wear the sword and dress of a young gentleman of his rank. It was not until he took sacred Orders that he put on the ecclesiastical uniform of his country.

We can imagine that Francis, on his return to Annecy, took up his scholastic life once more with renewed energy. He was one of those richly endowed beings, blessed with a keen intelligence and a strong will, driven by enthusiasm yet regulated by method, who are bound to go far and to do great things. Already this child of twelve is making a rule of life for himself. He prescribes for himself certain daily prayers, fixes hours for his spiritual reading, and makes regular visits to the churches. Though frequent communion was not then a general custom, he receives the Blessed Sacrament on the first Sunday of each month, then oftener, and finally every week. In the summer time, after sunset, when his comrades used to go out for a alk, he would often remain in the house, reading the lives of the ints and other works of devotion. He rose early every morning, order to gain time for study; and during the day would economize e hours strictly, making full use of every minute. It often needed order from his tutor to tear him away from his books. In class he stened attentively, and while his quick mind would grasp with ease hat was put before it, his retentive memory held it faithfully. In his ealings with his companions he was always gentle, sympathetic d affable. If there were some who teased or derided him, he bore with patience and good humour, and this not from any want of irit, but from a set desire to please God and to overcome himself. y disposition he was sensitive and quick-tempered, and the calmness d good nature which became such a feature of his character in ter-life were acquired by dint of long self-discipline.

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* Pérennès, l. i, chap. iv, p. 26. He quotes Mother de Chaugy.

Though he was thus training himself along lines of his own, he was evertheless remarkable for his obedience. A word from M. Déage d he would leave his beloved books to go out on some expedition ith his companions, and in his hours of recreation he was as happy any. Even in his walks, however, his mind would go back steadily God, and the beauties of nature became so many reminders to im of the divine goodness. Sometimes he would go with a few mpanions to a place near the town called the Isles, on the river ier; when they arrived at their destination, he turned to them and id: “ Let us first of all say a prayer to God: for it is he who made ese trees and meadows and the river that flows past us.” And they ould recite the Litanies together before passing on to their games.

Two incidents, related by his biographers, show us that, in addition his other qualities, he was also possessed of a very strong sense of stice. It would seem that these took place during the holidays, a time when M. de Boisy had evidently returned from his brother’s ouse to his own château. Francis was sent by his father on a visit M. Louis de Sales at Brens, and the servant who was to accompany im had received orders to buy him a pair of gloves at La Roche. he servant bargained so keenly with the glove-maker that the latter eclared, as he handed over the gloves, that he was losing on the ansaction. We are not concerned with the truth or originality his assertion. Francis took it literally, and asking the man how uch he reckoned his loss to be, paid the amount out of his own ocket-money. An hour or two later they were crossing a bridge at was under repairs, for the expenses of which the workmen emanded toll from the travellers. The servant refused to pay, robably because the nobility were exempt from such charges; ut Francis, noticing what had happened, would have none of it. What!” he said. “ These poor follows are to sweat and give emselves a deal of trouble in order to do us a service, and we are to pay them nothing? That is not just." Again his pocket-money was laid under contribution and the toll paid with a youthful courtesy that gave it a value of its own.

In his last years as a schoolboy Francis found fresh opportunities of exercising his good nature, during his holidays at home, in his relations with his younger brothers. These were Gallois, Louis and Jean François, who were born during the period enclosed by the years 1576 and 1578. It is manifest that by lending himself to their teasing and childish pranks he became their fast friend. Sometimes their mischievousness would seemingly pass due limits, and their parents, noticing it, would take them in hand for punishment, but Francis always interceded for them and obtained their pardon.* His particular favourite was Louis, whose disposition greatly resembled his own, and who had no greater joy than to be in his company. Mme. de Boisy used all her power to second the good influence which her eldest son exercised over his brothers. "My dear children," she would say to them, "imitate your brother Francis in everything. Follow his good advice and do what he tells you." There are not many boys in their teens in whom a mother, with such lofty ideals, could place such an implicit trust.

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* Dep. Mauris Garbillon.

CHAPTER III *
(1582–1588)

Francis goes to the University of Paris to study rhetoric and philosophy —His life in Paris—He takes up theology—His temptation to despair.

WHEN Francis had finished his humanities at Annecy, his father decided to send him to Paris, in order that he might study rhetoric and philosophy under the best masters, and at the same time obtain that general education and widening of the mind which is not the least valuable part of a university training. For this purpose M. de Boisy resolved to send his son to the college of Navarre, which was then frequented by the young nobility of the whole of Europe, and in particular by that of Savoy. Francis was delighted with the idea of going to Paris, but his father's choice of a college aroused in him the strongest misgivings. The young student felt himself more and more drawn to the ecclesiastical state, and he was afraid lest the lay element and atmosphere of this great fashionable college might lead him away from his ideals. His own preference was for the college of Clermont, an institution managed by the Jesuit Fathers, where he felt sure he would receive the education and religious training which he so much desired. Knowing, however, that his father was strongly fixed in his ideas, he did not at first venture to reveal his own preference: he remained for some time in considerable anxiety, striving to find a way out of the difficulty, and making it the special subject of his prayers. At length he decided to explain his point of view to his mother, and to ask her to second his desires. Mme. de Boisy had already noticed his preoccupation, and it was without difficulty, though with considerable feeling, that he opened out his heart to her. He explained how sure he was that, if he went to the college of Navarre, it would be to the detriment, if not the ultimate ruin, of his soul. He felt that he was weak and inexperienced, and likely to be misled by bad companionship. What was the value of worldly knowledge compared with such a risk? Yet he was convinced that a way could be found by which he could acquire the necessary education at Paris, and at the same time safeguard his virtue. That way was to send him to the college of the Jesuits, where the fathers had a great reputation both for their learning and the wisdom of their guidance. As a last appeal to his mother, he urged upon her that she would rather see him return as a fervent Christian than as an accomplished courtier—enslaved both by the world and his own passions.

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* Hamon, l. i, chap. 3

It need scarcely be said that his mother was easily convinced, the more so that the boy's arguments were seconded by her own fears. She undertook to speak to her husband with the object of persuading him to change his plans. The interview with M. de Boisy, which was the result of her promise, brought out anew the true nobility of his character. After listening to the representations of his young wife, he considered the matter in a liberal spirit from his son's point of view, set aside his own personal wishes, and gave a generous consent to the boy's request. One can imagine the happiness of Francis on hearing this decision and the love and gratitude with which he thanked his parents for the great favour.*

Preparations for the journey to Paris were soon made. M. Jean Déage was appointed tutor to the young student, to safeguard him in his new life and to aid him in his studies. The debt which Francis eventually owed to this devoted priest was incalculable, though it must also be admitted that the young student showed the greatest merit on more than one occasion in the way in which he submitted to his tutor's rule. M. Déage, we are told, was an ecclesiastic of much prudence and learning, of great piety and of an austere virtue that sometimes went as far as severity. As we shall see later on, this severity was occasionally expressed in no uncertain terms. It may be mentioned here that the saintly old man himself confessed to Michel Favre that he was "abrupt and of a choleric humour." Nevertheless, his love and devotion for his pupil far outweighed such a slight imperfection, exaggerated, doubtless, by his own humility. In addition to M. Déage, Francis also received, as his personal attendant, a young man named Georges Rolland, a loyal servant, whose continued faithfulness and honesty at length raised him to the rank of a valued friend.

It was the custom in those days that, when a young gentleman of rank left his home for the first time, he should choose for himself a motto or device. Francis chose the two words *Non excidet*, a motto difficult to translate literally, but expressing the boy's resolve to hold firmly to those high ideals which he had already marked out for the guidance of his whole life.† For his personal title he was to bear the name of M. de Villaroget, from one of his father's estates.

Having received his parents' blessing, Francis, accompanied by his twocompanions, at length set out upon his journey to Paris (1582). They travelled by Lyons, Bourges and Orleans.‡ The young traveller, as was to be expected, took a keen interest in all that he saw, paying especial attention to the well-known objects of celebrity on his way, making constant enquiries about the customs of the country through which he passed, and by his courtesy and gentle bearing arousing the admiration of his hosts and of all whom he met, to the great satisfaction of his tutor.

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* C. A. de S., l. i, p. 9.

† Cf. *Caritas non excidit* (1 Cor. xiii, 8).

‡ At Bourges it was that Francis probably heard Maldonatus, who resided there at the time, and not at Paris, as Charles Auguste asserts.

As soon as they had arrived at Paris and had acquired a temporary housing, Francis, leaving his sword behind him, hastened to the college of Clermont, in order to make known to the fathers his desire to enter their house as a student. The Jesuits, struck by his appearance and manners, welcomed him with great kindness, and it was arranged that he should follow their classes as an extern. They found lodgings for himself and his companions at the hôtel de la Rose Blanche, opposite the college itself, in the rue St Jacques. He then underwent the usual examination as to his knowledge and capabilities, and was judged fit to be received, according to his father's wishes, into the class of Rhetoric.

Francis gave himself up at once with the greatest ardour to his studies, and here, as at Annecy, his talents and diligence soon secured him the highest places in his class. This diligence, whether essential to his nature or acquired by constant application, had now become habitual with him. It invaded even his times of relaxation. François Thabuis, who was at Paris at this time, gives us, in the depositions of the Saint's canonization, a vivid little sketch of him in this light. "On the days of recreation he used not to go to the game of pell-mell (*paille-maille*) as did the others, but would walk out by himself, carrying a book of devotion or of study." At first Francis applied himself especially to the study of Latin. In this he had already received a good grounding at Annecy, and we have had a glimpse of the thoroughness of his methods. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that he soon became an accomplished Latin scholar, reading and speaking it fluently, and writing it with considerable ease in the rather florid and elaborate style of the new humanism. The fathers also recommended that he should take up the study of Greek, and in this he had the good fortune to be the pupil of an eminent professor named Father Jacques Sirmond. His work in this respect was afterwards to be of great utility to him in his disputes with the ministers of Calvinism as to the meaning of the texts of Scripture.

It cannot always have been easy for a young gentleman of his rank, living as a collegiate out-student, with a certain amount of liberty, to avoid the distractions of Paris life and such social intercourse as was more or less his duty. "Being an extern," says the Abbé Hamon, "he lodged in an hotel, and was not bound by the routine of the clerical student. According to the wishes of his parents, he lived the life of a young nobleman. He had connections in the city and was careful to maintain them. He would call not infrequently at the House of Mercœur, where his father had been a page, and he used to visit his cousin De Charmoisy—the future father-in-law of Philothea—who had well-known political relations. It was doubtless through him that he came to know M. Deshayes, who was one day to become Master of the household to Henry IV, and to introduce the Bishop of Geneva to that great monarch. Finally, about this time, he made the acquaintance of M. de Bérulle, for whom he conceived so deep a veneration and whom he would see again in his later journeys to Paris."

M. de Boisy had particularly urged M. Déage to arrange that his son should acquire all those accomplishments in vogue among the young nobility of France and everything that might enter into the ordinary education of a French gentleman. These included such pursuits as fencing, dancing and riding. Francis, with his desire to enter the ecclesiastical state and his yearning for the priesthood, experienced considerable repugnance for this part of his educational programme: but in obedience to his father's will he suppressed his own wishes, and undertook these exercises with his usual thoroughness, devoting to them a portion of his recreation. As he was well built, active and strong, it was not difficult for him to acquire a certain proficiency in them, and, apart from the probable benefit to his health at the time, they certainly helped to give him that dignity and grace of bearing for which he was ever remarked in his after-life.

For himself, his chief anxiety, dominating even his desire for learning, was to make progress in the spiritual life. His study of things profane was motived and ruled by his study of things sacred. He was as eager as ever in his reading of the lives of the saints. It was his custom always to carry with him some kind of spiritual book, and never to allow a day to pass by without reading it. His method was to read slowly, stopping at the end of a few sentences, to think over what he had read: on these reflections he would mould prayers, to which he would give a practical finish by forming such resolutions as would be of use to him in the near future. This, of course, was nothing less than meditation, the practice of which he afterwards perfected under the guidance of a director. In addition to his reading, he was also fond of attending sermons: in fact, to these he gave a preference, knowing that the hearing of the Word preached by accredited teachers carries with it more grace than does reading of itself. Yet in this also he showed his usual care and method. He made a point of choosing the best preachers, would take note of their more striking utterances, and strove to profit, not only by the teaching that was offered, but by the technical skill with which it was presented.

Realizing his want of experience in the spiritual life, he soon chose a director, and under wise guidance endeavoured to practise the higher virtues, which, in the case of such a brave nature as his, necessarily included the practice of mortification. He fasted frequently, and, not content with this, made it his custom to wear a hair-shirt every Wednesday, Friday and Saturday.

He continued the custom, which he had adopted at Annecy, of going to confession and communion every week, devoting great care to his preparation and thanksgiving. Naturally his companions were astonished at such a practice on the part of a young man who was apparently a lay-student, and one of them eventually asked him why he communicated so frequently. "For the same reason," he answered, "for which I often consult my master and my tutor. Our Lord is my master in the science of the saints, and I go to him often that he may teach me that science. For I care very little about becoming learned unless I also become holy." It was one of his pleasures to persuade his friends to accompany him to the altar-rail. On one occasion he invited a friend, Antoine Bouvard of La Roche, to come and breakfast with him the next day. When his guest arrived, Francis turned to him and said: "I am going to confession and communion at the church of the Jesuits; would you care to join me?" Bouvard, taken aback at first, accepted the invitation gladly, and they went off to the church together. When they had made their communion and thanksgiving, and were leaving the church, Francis remarked to his companion: "That was the first and the great feast that I wanted to give you. Now let us go and breakfast as soon as you like." He kept his guest with him for the rest of the day, and exerted his talent as a host so charmingly that Antoine Bouvard carried away with him the memory of one of the happiest days of his life.

In addition to his love for Holy Communion, Francis had also a great devotion to our Lord in the tabernacle. Every day he would visit some church and would make his way to the altar of the Blessed Sacrament, to stay there a considerable time in prayer. Who loves our Lord, loves his blessed Mother, and Francis was no exception to this rule. His devotion to our Lady was exceptional. He made her the confidante of all his joys and sorrows, went to her particularly in times of temptation and trial, and placed himself wholly under her protection. He had a preference for those churches which were favoured by some special statue or shrine of the Blessed Virgin. St Etienne des Grès was one of these, and it was before the statue of our Lady in this church that he made, if not a formal vow of chastity, at any rate a total dedication of his person to the service of God under her particular patronage.

Another predilection of his was to visit the houses and churches belonging to religious Orders. He found in the piety and fervour of the inmates of these monasteries a stimulant to his own devotion and an example that he strove to copy. "He took a delight," says Charles Auguste, "in conversing with the religious, and when he was not found at home or in the college, it was in the monasteries and churches that he was to be sought." The same author tells us that the young student took a particular pleasure in assisting at those Masses served by the Capuchin, Brother Ange de Joyeuse, whose renunciation of a brilliant position in the world for the service of God filled him with the deepest admiration.*

The Jesuit fathers, according to their custom, had established at the college of Clermont a congregation or sodality, placed under the protection of the Blessed Virgin, and it was not long before Francis was qualified to become a member. The rules by which he thus bound himself and the excellent examples which he received from his fellows became to him a new spur in his spiritual progress. He set himself more and more to the subjugation of his own desires, submitting even his lawful independence to the will of his superiors. He showed particular deference to the wishes of M. Déage, whom he regarded as being vested with his father's authority. In all things he consulted his tutor, and would not even leave the house without the latter's permission: if this permission was refused to him, he would quietly retire without the slightest trace of discontent. M. Déage used to relate that only on one occasion did he persist in his request after a first refusal, and this was when he asked favour for a servant whom the tutor intended to punish for some offence. It was on this occasion that M. Déage's "choleric humour" got the better of him, for when Francis continued to beg that the servant might be let off, the tutor, annoyed at this persistence, gave him a box on the ears and told him to leave the room. Francis received the affront without any sign of temper and obeyed, probably leaving poor M. Déage in a state of acute discontent with his somewhat hasty action.

Submissive to his superiors, he was gentle and courteous to his companions, avoiding anything that would hurt their feelings and schooling himself not to take umbrage, when offence was inadvertently or designedly given by them. His companions were "the more astonished at his gentleness in that they recognized it to be the effect of virtue and not of temperament. For on the slightest acquaintance with him it was easy to notice that he possessed a quick and passionate nature, which only maintained a consistent gentleness by the continual mastering of character and heart. Nothing, as a matter of fact, could be truer, and we know it from his own lips. 'When I was a lad,' he said later to Father de la Rivière, 'I gave myself up to the practice of gentleness and humility with a good deal of fervour. For several years I scarcely thought of anything else but acquiring these qualities.'"

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* This must have been in the later years of his stay in Paris. Henri de Joyeuse, on the death of his wife, Catherine de la Valette, received the habit for the first time on September 4, 1587. When three of his brothers had been killed in the wars of religion, it was thought right that he should leave his convent, to place himself at the head of an army and of his family, as Duc de Joyeuse. The Pope granted him dispensation from his vows. As Governor of Languedoc, he fought valiantly and skilfully against the Huguenots until the accession of Henry IV brought peace to France. Henry made him a marshal of France and confirmed him as Governor of Languedoc, but the duke, having accomplished his work, once more gave up the world and became a Capuchin again on February 8, 1599. He died in 1608. Stanley Weyman's description of him in the *Abbess of Vlaye* is, of course, very imaginative.

It was not long before his virtue became so evident in the eyes of his superiors and of his companions in the sodality of the Blessed Virgin that he was promoted to the positions of assistant and prefect, the first places in the confraternity, and, when his term of office expired, repeatedly re-elected. His duties of prefect he fulfilled with the greatest diligence and sense of responsibility. He worked hard for the good of the sodality, recruited new members among those whom he saw would make good subjects, watched over them with sympathy and care, and gave frequent exhortations at the assemblies of the society. His influence over his companions was remarkable. He was not one of those good people whose external austerity repels others. For those who had any sort of attraction towards an honest and straight life he was full of charm and tact. When he spoke, he spoke at the right moment, and his words had their full effect, both from their own particular aptness to the occasion and from the fact that they were supported by the weight of his own example. Many years afterwards the Jesuit father, Etienne Binet, who had been one of Francis's comrades in these days, affirmed his conviction that he owed to M. de Villaroget his own vocation. "It was not so much that he exhorted me to enter religion, but that, having become his fast friend when we were both students in Paris, his saintly example drew my heart towards the practice of virtue."

After studying rhetoric for two years, Francis passed on at the age of sixteen to the more important subject of philosophy. Because its importance was realized in those days, the course usually given was a long one—nothing less than four years, and the most capable men were chosen to teach it. Francis had the good fortune to study under two remarkable masters, Jean François Suarez* and Jerome Dandini, the commentator of Aristotle. The Saint's notebooks, which are still preserved, witness to the keen interest with which he conducted his study. They were evidently composed with the greatest care, clear in their conception and beautifully written. The margins are covered with indications, showing the divisions and subdivisions along with the headings of the proofs, and are in themselves quite an analysis of the work. It shows that the young student was already methodical, not merely in the matter of execution, but even in the process of his thought.

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* A native of Avignon, not the more famous theologian, Francisco Suarez.

For the whole of the first year of this new period he devoted himself entirely to philosophy. But, at the beginning of the second year, perceiving that with a stricter economy of time he could undertake further studies, and having always in view the ecclesiastical state, he conceived an intense desire to learn theology. With the usual intensity of his ardent temperament he grew to desire this thing so strongly that the want of it reacted upon his outer bearing, and attracted the attention of M. Déage. On the Quinquagesima Sunday of that year his tutor, noticing his preoccupation, and not understanding its cause, decided that he had been overworking. M. Déage suggested that, as he seemed ill or out of spirits, he was probably in need of a change, and proposed that they should go out together and see the various amusements of the Carnival. Francis begged as a favour to be excused, quoting the words of the psalm—*Averte oculos meos ne videant vanitatem*. "But what can I do to cheer you up?" asked his tutor. "*Domine, ut videam*, make me to see," answered Francis, this time quoting from the Gospel of the Sunday. "And what do you want to see?" "I want to see theology; for theology alone can teach me what God wants to show my soul; and as long as I do not study it, I shall be like a blind man." M. Déage was not the sort of tutor to discourage so excellent an ambition. He himself, though a man of mature years and of considerable learning, was employing his spare time by following a course of theology at the Sorbonne. He also knew that his pupil's capacity and strength of intellect were equal to combining the two subjects without harm to either. He accordingly granted Francis the desired permission and gave him leave to devote three hours a day to the study of sacred science. Such a subject, one may remark, was no uncommon thing for a layman in those days, and it was quite a custom for young gentlemen of good education to take a degree in theology as part of their university course.

Francis applied himself with ardour and joy to his new work, which was the fulfilment of his cherished ambitions. "At Paris," he used to say afterwards, "I learned several things to please my father, but theology I learned to please myself." He made a beginning by studying the notebooks which his tutor had compiled from the dictation of the various professors at the Sorbonne and then began to attend the lectures himself, sometimes missing his meals in order to do so. He assisted at the public conferences or defensions, at which the different theses were proposed, discussed and defended: at these he would make notes of the new proofs which he heard, of the difficulties suggested by the objectors, and of the answers given thereto by the defenders. He would also have discussions with his tutor or with the other divinity students, and he was never weary of questioning and reflecting, so long as the matter was not thrashed out to his full satisfaction.

His professor of sacred Scripture, of which he followed a course at the Collège Royal, was Gilbert Génébrard, a Benedictine monk, an enthusiastic leaguer, afterwards Archbishop of Aix, from whom he also learned the elements of Hebrew. Francis always bore the memory of this eminent professor in veneration and love. It was to Génébrard that he attributed his keen sense of the divine love. He used to say that, when he was a disciple of Génébrard's at Paris, he had assisted at that great doctor's exposition of the Canticle of Canticles, and that he ever afterwards bore it in his mind with the keenness of first impressions.

It is not certain who were the other professors who assisted him in his theological studies. Fathers Gordon-Huntley, Tyrius and Saphore were teaching dogma and morals at the College of Clermont at this time. These masters and others doubtless put their learning at his disposition. "But, above all, he himself was his own instructor by his diligence. He drew theology from its own sources, the sacred Scriptures, the works of the fathers and the great scholastics. The terrible temptation to despair, which was to form such an epoch in his life, gave a particular direction to the researches of his mind, and for several years it was with a sort of passion that he studied the profound mysteries of grace."*

The temptation alluded to above is mentioned in all the biographies of the Saint, and is of such importance in the spiritual formation of the future Bishop and director as to warrant its being described in detail. As the Abbé Hamon's account of this crisis in the life of Francis is by far the best, not only in the history of the temptation, but also in the enumeration of its causes and of the theological opinions which it involved, that account is here given in full.

"The temptation originated in the thought which came to Francis that perhaps he was not in a state of grace, and he was led to entertain this idea by the fact that he felt himself to be weak, without courage and energy to struggle against the temptations which might arise. This thought, so distressing for such a heart as his, cruelly oppressed his soul, without at first altogether overwhelming it. For he told himself that God, who does nothing in vain, does not give us the grace of courage at a time when there is no occasion for its use: that he only demands of us then the desire to resist temptation when it shall come, the disposition to ask for his grace by prayer when we need it, and the hope that, aided by his help, we shall finally triumph over evil. 'But,' his imagination would suggest, 'with your actual weakness it is certain that you would fall into mortal sin should a dangerous occasion present itself.' This thought was a further cause of anxiety to his sensitive soul. He strove to reassure himself by remembering that God is never wanting in the moment of peril, provided that we pray to him; that many who mistrusted their strength and feared that they would not resist firmly on occasion actually triumphed in the struggle because the sentiment of their weakness induced them to have recourse to God, to watch, to humble themselves and to pray. 'Why art thou sad, O my soul?' he would say with David, 'and why dost thou disquiet me? Hope in God. O my God, when my strength shall fail me, do not thou abandon me.'"

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* Dom Mackey, E.N., Tom. I, p. xli.

In spite of this reasoning, however, the temptation did not leave him. Deprived of the sweetness of divine love which he had enjoyed so long, insensible to everything which up till then had been the delight of his heart, even to the most touching things which he might hear or read, he conceived the notion that perhaps this dryness and spiritual aridity were the punishment for some unfaithfulness; that perhaps by some mortal sin he had lost the grace and friendship of God, and that for this good Master he was henceforth only an object of hatred and wrath. Then, along with this overwhelming thought, there came to his mind the doctrine of the small number of the elect, the depths of the mystery of predestination, the terrible severity of the judgements of God, and his own profound unworthiness, which his humility made him feel so keenly: and it seemed to him impossible that a man so bad as he imagined himself to be, could possibly be found in the small number of the predestined. It was not that he feared that the grace of God would be wanting to him, but that he himself would be wanting to grace, and would thus be cast by his own fault into the eternal abyss. From all this there came a cruel anxiety to his soul. In vain he told himself that God did not will that we should have an absolute certainty of our being in a state of grace, much less of our obtaining final perseverance; that we ought to respect the darkness which he has thought fit to cast over our present state and our future destiny; and that, without trying to discern with too curious an eye what he wishes to hide from us, we ought to apply ourselves solely to doing his holy will. All the while begging that he might have the grace to love God well in this life, whatever fate might be reserved for him in the other, he strove vainly to cast out of his imagination the terrible thought of his eternal reprobation. He came back to it continually in spite of himself. It constantly forced itself into his mind as at least a probability, and in the end he was overwhelmed by it completely.

What afflicted him most in this appalling prevision was not indeed the torments of hell, but solely the thought that the souls in hell blaspheme and hate God. ‘Lord,’ he would exclaim, ‘if I am never to see thee, grant at least this diminution of my punishment—that I may never be allowed to curse or blaspheme thee. O Love, O Charity, O Beauty to which I have vowed all my affections, I shall never then enjoy the delights of your presence! I shall never be *inebriated with the plenty of thy house.* I shall never *go over into the place of the wonderful tabernacle* where resides my God!

‘O most loving Virgin,’ he would add, addressing himself to the Mother of God, ‘you whose charms can never rejoice hell, I shall never then see you in the kingdom of your Son, fair as the moon, bright as the sun! Am I never to share in the immense benefit of the resurrection? Yet did not my sweet Jesus die for me as well as for others? Ah, Lord, however it may be, if I cannot love you in the other world, since there is *no one who shall confess to thee in hell*, at any rate let me take advantage of every moment of my short life to love you here on earth.’

In the midst of this bitter anguish his health became visibly affected: the colour faded from his cheeks, and he became pale and worn. In a short time jaundice invaded the whole of his person, and caused him exquisite torture. He could scarcely eat, drink or sleep, and could with difficulty walk or hold himself upon his feet. Nevertheless, he relaxed none of his ordinary prayers and religious practices: on the contrary, he redoubled his entreaties to God and to the Blessed Virgin, asking of both to preserve within his heart the hope of the divine mercy.

In order to escape from this anguish, he thought it would be useful to form clear ideas for himself on the great question which preoccupied him; and, for this purpose, to study the teaching of theologians upon predestination. It may be remembered, moreover, that at this time all these questions of grace and free will were being passionately discussed in the schools, as a result of the errors of Calvin and Baius. Consequently, with the help of the great masters of the divine science, he strove to penetrate even into the most secret thoughts of God, in order to obtain an understanding of the eternal decrees. In this sublime study St Augustine and St Thomas, the first whom he consulted, represented God to him as predestinating his saints to glory uniquely for his own good pleasure, independently of the prevision of their works, and in virtue of this *a priori* decree, conferring upon them the graces necessary in order that they should merit this glory. This opinion, instead of bringing him relief, only increased his trouble; he therefore passed on to the study of other theologians, this time of the Jesuit school, who professed on he contrary that in God the decree of predestination to glory has or first grounds, if one may so speak, not the divine good pleasure lone, but the prevision of the merits and sanctity of the elect.

God foresees their merits, and, in consequence of this prevision, he predestines them to glory. This opinion pleased and consoled him. He made a study of it, drawing up its proofs in form; and the more deeply he entered into them, the more convincing they seemed to him. It was then that, falling on his knees at the feet, as it were, of St Augustine and St Thomas, to ask their pardon for venturing to embrace an opinion contrary to theirs, he composed that touching protestation which he loved to repeat often in order to restore his courage and console his anguish. . . . We give a translation of the text which Canon Gard and Father de Quœx, prior of the monastery of Talloires, attested on oath to have been copied by them from the Saint's autograph version.

'Prostrate at the feet of St Thomas and St Augustine, willing to be ignorant of all things in order that I may know him who is the knowledge of the Father, the Christ crucified, although I do not doubt that what I have written is true, inasmuch as I see nothing in it which can possibly cast doubt upon its truth; nevertheless, since I see not all things, and since so wondrous a mystery is too dazzling for my weak eyes to dwell upon, if the contrary should afterwards prove true (which I think will never be), and even if (which I pray the Lord Jesus forfend) I should know myself to be damned by that will which Thomas affirms to be in God for the manifestation of his justice, then, dismayed indeed, but willingly receiving the judgement of the Most High, I will say with the prophet: *Shall not my soul be subject to God? Yea, Father, for so it hath seemed good in thy sight. Thy will be done.* And this in the anguish of my soul I will repeat and repeat, until God, changing my life and his sentence, shall make answer unto me: *Have confidence, O son. I desire not the death of the wicked, but rather that he live. For the dead shall not praise me, nor any of them that go down to hell. Thee, O my son, like all things else, have I made for myself. For this is my will, your sanctification. My soul hates nothing of those things which I have made. Why is thy soul sad and why does it disquiet thee? Hope in God, for thou shalt still give praise to him: he is the salvation of thy countenance and thy God. Thou shalt not go down into hell, but shalt go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob. Thou art not dead but sleepest. This sickness is not unto death, but that, being converted, thou shalt glorify God. Well done, poor servant, unworthy indeed, yet faithful! Because thou hast hoped in me, confiding in my mercy, and because in a few things—thy will to glorify me by thy eternal loss, if so it had pleased me—thou hast been faithful, I will place thee over many things. And because thou hast been willing to manifest my Name even by suffering, if need had been (although therein would have been small glory for that Name, which is not that of a judge but is Jesus), I will place thee over many things, that in eternal happiness* *thou mayest praise me, giving glory indeed to my Name. By myself I have sworn that, because thou hast prepared thy heart as a sacrifice to my justice and hast not spared thyself, I will bless thee with an everlasting blessing, that thou mayest enter into the joy of thy Lord.* And even then must I answer in no other way than as before: *Amen, even thus, O Father, because such is pleasing before thee. My heart is ready for punishment for thy sake, and for thy Name's sake is my heart prepared for glory. O Jesus, I am become like a beast of burden before thee, but thou, O Lord, be thou always with me. Be it done unto me according to that word of thine—I will not the death of the sinner but rather that he be converted and live. Therefore in thy sanctuary I will lift up my hands in thy Name. Jesus. Mary.*'

Such saintly dispositions could scarcely fail to touch the heart of God, and of a truth the hour of deliverance was close at hand. Returning one day from the college in a state of great discouragement the young man entered the church of St Etienne des Grès, and placed himself in prayer before that statue of our Lady, at the feet of which some time before he had formed the resolution of guarding perpetual chastity. There, written upon a tablet for the use of the faithful, was found a prayer in honour of the Mother of God; he seized it with confidence and recited it under the stress of a sudden and intense emotion. It was the well-known *Memorare*—"Remember, O most loving Virgin Mary, that never has it been heard that anyone flying to thy protection, imploring thy help, seeking thy ntercession, was left forsaken. Filled with this very confidence, I fly to thee, O Virgin of virgins, my Mother: to thee I come, before thee I stand, a sorrowing sinner. Despise not my words, O Mother of the Word, but mercifully hear and grant my prayer." Then, turning to God, he begged that through the prayers of Mary his mind and body might be restored to their former state, making at the same time a vow of perpetual chastity, and promising to say each day in memory of that vow the rosary of six decades. Scarcely had he said these words, than he experienced a sensation throughout his whole body as if there had fallen away from him a crust of leprosy. His oul, regaining its confidence after six weeks of intensest suffering, entered into a deep peace, his health was immediately restored, and he blessed God, convinced that the divine Goodness had only permitted him to undergo so terrible a trial for his own ultimate good.

It cannot but be of use to enquire with all reverence into the design f the Spirit of God in allowing Francis to undergo this temptation. n the first place, it seems almost an invariable rule of the divine Wisdom, when dealing with those elect souls who are to do important work in his service, to put them through the severe test of spiritual ridity or of some temptation such as was endured by Francis. One result in his case was the purification of his love, which thus proved itself ready to serve God for God's sake alone, not merely without reward, but even under the prospect of eternal loss. His own temptation, moreover, was to give him a deep sympathy with those who were under similar trials. "Alas!" he afterwards wrote to such a one, "what an extraordinary torment it is! My soul, which endured it for six long weeks, is capable, indeed, of sympathizing with those who are thus afflicted." This temptation, again, was one of those experiences which helped to make him the skilful director of souls such as he eventually became, for the man who has himself fought knows how to direct others in their combats. And finally the trial left a mark upon his mind, leading him to abandon certain extreme opinions of scholastic theology, in order to embrace others more likely to assist souls towards salvation, and giving him a disinclination to discuss those mysteries of predestination and free will, which God seems to have placed beyond the capacity of the human intellect and which it nevertheless is ever trying to solve.

The immediate result of his happy issue from this trial was an increased ardour in the service of God. Not content henceforth with an hour's meditation every day, he devoted to it all the time that he could spare from his studies and necessary recreation. He gave himself up still more to his religious practices, his visits to the Blessed Sacrament, his frequenting of religious houses, his exercises of mortification, and his devotion to our Lady, to whose intercession he felt he owed so much. He was scrupulous in fulfilling the promise he had made to recite his rosary, the beads of which he carried always in his belt: and whenever his duties allowed him, devoted considerable time to it by combining it with meditations. We are told that when he wanted to withdraw to his room for this purpose he would say to his tutor: "I am going on guard at the court of my Queen." He also recited the *Memorare* every day and always had a great predilection for this prayer, which he used to recommend to the use of his friends.

His studies also were now being more and more directed towards the purpose that was slowly but surely taking clearer form in his will. He was already composing the manuscript books which were to serve him in his apostolic work, and he was particular to make note especially of those things which might be useful to souls. Yet this did not make him restrict his studies along a narrow groove. While holding authority in full reverence, and reading approved authors, he also ventured to think for himself. He not only learnt, but he meditated on what he learnt.

Nor did he restrict himself to theological works and books of devotion. His reading was wide and modern of its time, including such books as the Essays of Montaigne, then recently published. He knew that, humanly speaking, it was useless to gather a store of ecclesiastical learning in his mind, unless he also learned how to communicate his knowledge to the best advantage. He was at pains, therefore, to gather together a mass of general knowledge for the purpose of illustration and interest, and he also strove to perfect himself in his French writing. In his faith as to the future and utility of that language he might almost be called a disciple of Ronsard and the other members of the famous Pleiad, even if he did not imitate them in the details of his style. Latin he wrote in a fluent and refined style, but he saw that the day of the Latin book, read by the learned few, was fast passing away, and that if some day he wished to act with any force upon the bulk of the people, it must be through the medium of the language which they spoke in everyday life. Of his style M. Hamon says: "He is of the school of Montaigne and loves a language that is picturesque, vivid, and full of images. He does not care for the dry abstract style of Calvin and his school. He wants our language to keep its simplicity, its flexibility, its originality, and its liberty, and he will regulate himself upon those principles during the whole course of his life."

CHAPTER IV*

(1588–1591)

Francis goes to Padua to study law—His rule of life—Temptations—Illness—His studies—He gains his degree

HIS sojourn at Paris, however, was now drawing to a close. Charles Auguste tells us that "he was judged to be perfect in philosophy," and M. Déage wrote to M. de Boisy asking for instructions. It is not unlikely, as some of the Saint's biographers aver, that the tutor, seeing his pupil's bent for the religious life, was afraid that he might bethink himself of entering some monastic Order. Whatever M. Déage himself might think of such a step, he knew well enough that it would not tally with the wishes of M. de Boisy, and the good priest might well be anxious not to incur any responsibility in the matter. Moreover, it seemed very likely that Paris was about to pass through times of renewed strife and bloodshed. The quarrel between Henry III and the Duke of Guise had already resulted in the tempestuous day of the Barricades (May 12, 1588), and the Parisians, who supported the Catholic League wholeheartedly, were more than ready to express their views by force of arms. It was probably with a feeling of relief, therefore, that M. Déage received instructions to conduct his pupil back to his home in Savoy. M. de Boisy, however, gave directions that on their return journey they should stop at some of the nobler cities of France, in order that Francis might have an opportunity of seeing whatever historical buildings and objects of interest they might possess.

Accordingly, preparations for the journey were undertaken and a final round of farewell visits was made. Francis made his way to the college of Clermont for the last time, to take leave of the Jesuit fathers and to thank them for the many kindnesses which he had received at their hands. André de Sauzea relates that the fathers urged M. Déage to take particular care of his pupil, for that he was one day to become a great saint. The young man also paid farewell visits to his other friends in Paris, who all testified the keenest regret at the prospect of losing him. Four young noblemen, wishing to give him an especial proof of their affection, accompanied him on his journey as far as Lyons.

At length Francis arrived at the château of Brens, in Chablais, where the family was then residing, and was received with open arms by his parents. It was now six years since they had seen him. Doubtless it was with a slight feeling of anxiety, born of their love, that they watched for the effects of their son's life at Paris, and great must have been their joy at its beneficial results. In every way he fulfilled the promise of his youth. Fully developed in mind and body, handsome, dignified and graceful, charming in his manners, gentle and unsullied in his character, his bearing and conversation now rewarded them amply for the sacrifice entailed by his long absence. Devoted as they were to the religious side of life, they saw with deep gratitude the simple and unostentatious sincerity of his piety, and they must now have found continual reason for rejoicing that they had granted the boy's request and allowed him to pursue his studies at the college of Clermont under the Jesuits.

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* Hamon, l. i, chap. 4.

After having devoted the first period of his home-coming to his parents, Francis next turned his attentions to fulfilling his social duties and to visiting his relatives and family friends. Upon these he created the same impression as he had upon his parents. Everywhere his kindness and courtesy made him friends, everywhere his society was sought after and valued, so that he became the object of a popularity that might easily have turned his head, had his disposition inclined towards vanity.

At home his great joy was to renew his friendship with his younger brothers, and especially with Louis, for whom, as we have already seen, he had a particular attraction. It does not seem that at first his relations with Jean-François were quite as intimate, not because of any fault on the part of Francis, but because the younger brother was of a slightly difficult character in his early years. But here again, by dint of his kindness and tact, by generosity in sharing his pleasures, and even by going back to his old habit of offering to undertake the boy's punishments for him, Francis made another conquest, and the three brothers became a united trio. He sometimes used to describe their relations by means of a quaintly humorous comparison, that is in some way a foretaste of his similes in the *Devout Life*. "We three would make the dressing of a very good salad. Jean-François would be the vinegar, because of his strength; Louis, the salt, because he is so good; and poor old Francis, who is a good-natured lump of a fellow, would serve for oil, so fond is he of peace."

Francis was not allowed, however, to remain long at home. His father did not consider his education complete, and wished to send him to Padua, to study law under the famous professor, Pancirola. M. de Boisy still destined his son for the magistrature, and further specialized work was absolutely necessary for that end. There was also the question of general education. The young M. de Villaroget had seen France: he was now to see Italy. This was all the more necessary on account of the situation of Savoy, lying as it did between the two great countries, influenced by the political happenings of both, and obliged for its own sake to understand their very different national temperaments and ambitions. Francis was as delighted at the prospect of going to Padua as he had been at that of studying in Paris, with this difference that, being no longer a child and having gained experience in the great French capital, he was able to look forward to this new venture with more confidence in himself. He was also rejoiced at the thought of studying under so celebrated a professor as Pancirola, of whose reputation he had heard even in Paris. But above all he looked upon the University of Padua as a centre of sacred knowledge, where he was sure to find ample means of advancing in the science that was so close to his heart, and of equipping his mind still better for the state to which he felt himself called. He knew, of course, his father's intentions, and these indeed seemed to place a formidable obstacle in the path of his desires; but he had a calm confidence that the divine Providence, if it was guiding him towards the priesthood, would so order events as to make his vocation evident even in his father's eyes. In the meantime there was obedience and patience.

M. Déage had so well accomplished his duties at Paris that he was again chosen as the young man's tutor in his new studies, and it may be taken as certain that the faithful Georges Rolland also accompanied his master. When the necessary preparations were made, the party set out on its journey towards Italy. Although it was the winter season, the travellers succeeded in making the difficult crossing of the Alps—a formidable undertaking in those days—without mishap, and they arrived at Padua either towards the last days of 1588 or in the early spring of the next year.

Padua at this time belonged to the Venetians, whose government spared neither pains nor expense to make it a great seat of learning. Its university had a European fame. Every branch of science then known to the civilized world was taught there, and besides philosophy and theology it was especially famous for its courses of law, medicine, and natural science. "To each chair were appointed two professors, the one a native of the country and the other a foreigner. Twenty thousand students followed the various lectures. Forty monasteries, founded around the great basilica that guarded the tomb of St Anthony, rivalled each other keenly in the pursuit of university degrees" (Hamon). Amongst these religious houses we may particularly remark the mother house of the Reformed Benedictines of Italy, the great Franciscan convent attached to the church of St Anthony, and the college of the Jesuits.* Like all the great learned cities of the time, Padua presented the most amazing contrasts, due to the heterogeneous nature of the crowd that assembled within its walls—the daring of experimental thought along with stern rigidness of orthodoxy, the still youthful humanism fighting its ancient scholastic predecessor, a wild license of morals as a background to the most signal examples of sanctity, brawling and bloodshed in the streets that flanked the walls of peaceful study and recollection.

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* Dom Mackey, *Introduction to Controversies*, E.N., Tom. I, p. xlii.

As soon as Francis was settled in his new home, he began the same life of study and prayer that we have seen him lead at Paris. Apart from lectures he devoted eight hours a day to study, four to that of law, and the remainder to theology; nor did he ever excuse himself from this rule except for grave reasons, holding that consistent regularity in work was of the utmost importance as the means, not only of acquiring true learning, but of exercising self-discipline and of gaining command over his will.

Whatever time was left over from his studies and from the recreation which his tutor obliged him to take was devoted to his exercises of piety, for he still placed his spirituality in the foreground of his view of life. Remembering his experiences at Paris, he hastened to seek out a prudent director for his conscience, and in this he had the good fortune to fall into the hands of an eminent priest, whose acquaintance he had already made in the French capital. This was Father Antoine Possevin, a member of the Society of Jesus, a man well-known for his learning, an eloquent preacher, and a master of languages. He had already filled the difficult post of Nuncio in Sweden, Russia and Poland, and had come to Padua recently, a year before the arrival of M. de Villaroget, in order to devote himself to the writing of works on the sacred Scripture. To this prudent counsellor Francis committed the direction of his soul. He at once consulted him about the great difficulty in which he then found himself with regard to his vocation, explaining on the one hand his own desires for the priesthood, and, on the other, his father's wish that he should enter the career of the law. Father Possevin acted with the greatest deliberation in the matter, reflecting upon it at length, making it the subject of prayer, and carefully studying the character and dispositions of his penitent. After the lapse of several months he came to the mature conclusion that the young man's attraction to the clerical state was a genuine call from God. He is even said to have been so far gifted with spiritual foresight as to have predicted that Francis would one day become the Bishop of Geneva. This much at least is certain, supported by the oath of reliable witnesses, that, speaking of Francis to M. Déage, he remarked to the latter: "You have there a young man who will one day be a great prelate in the Church."* The Jesuit father was so convinced of this truth that, valuable as was his time, he felt that it could not be better spent than in training the young student for his future work, and as a rule he devoted to the theological instruction of his pupil no less than three hours a day.

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* Dep. of M. de Ronis in 1632.

Strengthened by his confessor's approval and help, Francis, without neglecting those studies which he had undertaken in obedience to his father, gave himself up with renewed vigour to his theology. Amongst the more formally scientific authors he made an especial study of St Thomas's *Summa*, which was always open upon his desk, and of the works of St Bonaventure. From Cardinal Bellarmine's *Controversies*, a book more especially suited to the needs of the day, he drew a store of practical learning that was later to be of the greatest use to him in his own controversies with the Calvinistic ministers. For more general reading in things sacred he directed his attention to the works of the Fathers—St John Chrysostom, St Augustine, St Jerome and St Bernard. We are told that he had a particular liking for St Cyprian, because this father's style, as St Jerome describes in one of his epistles, flows along in gentleness and peace like the stream of a pure fountain. Francis even strove to imitate the style of this saint, writing several compositions modelled to the best of his ability upon it; unfortunately these are lost.

But, above all, he devoted himself especially to the constant study of Scripture, reading it carefully with the help of the best commentators, meditating upon it in his spiritual exercises, and storing his mind with its treasures. We have already seen in his protestation to St Thomas and St Augustine how familiar he was with the sacred text, how it entered into his conversation with M. Déage on that famous Quinquagesima Sunday that began his ecclesiastical studies: and during the whole of his life one is struck by the aptness and spontaneity with which the words of the Bible came up to his lips. In fact, it may be permissible to point out here, for future remembrance, that this habit of his is one of the difficulties found in rendering the true spirit of his conversation into English. It is not far wrong to say that in our language this constant employment of Scripture texts in conversation smacks rather of the unctuous, yet doubtless sincere, use of the Puritan, and in the present case is likely to give a certain feeling of stiltedness to the talk of one who, in reality, was sincerity itself and the sworn enemy of pedantry, either sacred or profane.

It is not to be supposed that the intense and sustained work which Francis imposed upon himself was carried on without a struggle. There must have been times when mind and body rebelled against such constant application, and it was doubtless during these periods of weariness that he used to encourage himself with the words which he was heard to use on several occasions. "Courage, Francis, courage. *Ad quid venisti ?* For what end have you come into this world ? *The days of man are short and pass like a shadow. Let us* *do good while we have the time. The night cometh when no man can work.* Bitterly will you regret it some day if you do not make full use of your opportunities now." And Charles Auguste places in his mouth the quaint conceit: "Time is bald at the back of his head, so that it is difficult to catch him as he flies from us."

Just as Francis had belonged to the sodality at the college of Clermont, so now, at the invitation of the Jesuits, he joined a similar confraternity at their college in Padua; and here again he distinguished himself by his exactitude in obeying its rules and in attending its meetings. He does not seem, however, to have accepted any office such as he held at Paris.

It was about this time that he drew up his well-known rule of conduct, a remarkable document when we consider the youthfulness of its author. It is not likely that, having made such a rule, he would fall short of its execution, and it may be looked upon, therefore, as an actual account of his spiritual exercises and of his general conduct in his daily life. For this reason, and because it includes many things that are very characteristic of him, we venture to give it almost in its entirety.

EXERCISE OF PREPARATION

Before everything else I will always place the exercise of preparation; I will make it at least once in the day, and that in the morning. But if some exceptional occasion should present itself, I will make particular use of that, and will take it for the subject of my exercise. But because preparation is, as it were, the surveyor of all my actions, I will therein occupy myself, according to the diversity of events and the measure of my time, as to the manner in which I must proceed in my daily affairs, in order worthily to fulfil my obligations.

Part I

Invocation

The first part of this exercise is invocation. Recognizing that I am exposed to numberless dangers, I will implore the assistance of my God, and will say to him: "*Lord, unless thou dost keep my soul, he watcheth in vain that keepeth it.*"

Moreover, observing that social intercourse has in times past caused me to fall into many faults, I will also say: "*Let my soul speak out: often have they fought against me from my youth.*" And again: "*Lord, be thou unto me a God, a protector and a house of refuge to save me. If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.*"

Finally, I will beg of him to make me worthy to pass the day without offending him, and for this purpose will take what is written in the 142nd psalm: "*Make the way known to me wherein I should walk:*

for I have lifted up my soul to thee. Deliver me from my enemies, O Lord : to thee have I fled. Teach me to do thy will, for thou art my God. Thy good Spirit shall lead me into the right land. For thy Name's sake thou shalt quicken me in thy justice."

PART II

Imagination

The second part is the use of the imagination, which consists in conjecturing and foreseeing all that is likely to happen during the day. Thus I will seriously think of all the untoward things that may befall me, of the company in which I may have to pass my time, of the different affairs with which I may be occupied, of the places I may have to visit, of the dangerous occasions in which I may be caught for want of proper caution. In this way, with the help of our Lord, I shall forestall with wisdom and prudence every difficulty that may arise.

PART III

Disposition

The third part of my exercise is to plan out my day. After having examined the maze of pathways along which I might easily wander and be lost, I will seek out and consider the most suitable means to prevent my taking a wrong turn. I will see what there is to be done, in what manner and in what order my various tasks should be undertaken, in what way I am to speak in certain company. I will even decide as to my appearance and clothes. In fact, I will strive to foresee what I am to seek after and what to avoid.

PART IV

Resolution

The fourth part consists in my resolutions. I will make then a strong resolve never to offend God again in the future, but particularly during that day; and for this I will use the words of the royal prophet David: "*Shall not my soul be subject to God ? For from him is my salvation.*"

It is, indeed, a very great cowardice to let oneself be drawn into evil against the love and will of the Creator by the fear or love, the hatred or desire, of any creature whatsoever. In fact, once we have recognized this Lord of infinite majesty as worthy of all our honour and service, we cannot despise or offend him except through cowardice of soul. Why, then, should we transgress his just laws even to avoid bodily harm or the loss of goods or honours? What, after all, can creatures do either for or against us? Let us, therefore, take consolation and courage, strengthening our hearts with those words of the Psalmist: "*The Lord hath reigned, he that sitteth upon the Cherubim: let the people be angry, let the earth be moved.*"

PART V

Recommendation

The fifth part consists in commending myself to God. In doing this I shall place myself entirely, with all that belongs to me, in the hands of the eternal Goodness, and I will beg of him ever to look upon me as being completely given up to him. I will leave to him absolutely the care of my person—what I am and what he wishes me to be. I will say from the depths of my heart: "*One thing I have asked of the Lord: this will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of my Lord all the days of my life.* To thee do I recommend my soul, my mind, my heart, my memory, my understanding, my will. And do thou grant me this grace, that with all these faculties of my being I may serve thee, love thee, please thee and adore thee for ever."

RULES FOR PASSING THE DAY WELL

First Article

In the morning, as soon as I awake, I will give thanks to my Lord and my God with these words of the Psalmist: "*If I have remembered thee upon my bed, I will meditate upon thee in the morning: because thou hast been my helper.*" After which I will think on some sacred mystery, particularly the devotion of the shepherds who came at the dawn to adore the divine Child; of our Lord appearing to our Lady, his sweet Mother, on the day of his triumphant resurrection; of the zeal of the three Maries, who, inspired by a strong impulse of devotion, rose early in the morning, the first day of the week, to see and honour in the sepulchre the body of the true God of life, who died for us.

Then I will consider that our beloved Saviour is the *light to the revelation of the gentiles*, who is to drive away the darkness of sin and *enlighten them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death*, in order to guide our steps in the way of peace. Then, making a firm resolution for the whole of the day, I will sing with David: "*In the morning I will stand before thee and will see: because thou art not a God that willest iniquity.*" Therefore, will I fly from it with all my power as from a thing utterly hateful to thy infinite majesty.

Second Article

I will not fail to hear Mass every day; and in order to assist at this ineffable mystery in the proper manner, I will call upon all the faculties of my soul to do their duty therein, and will exhort them by means of that excellent verse of a psalm: "*Come and behold ye the works of the Lord: what wonders he hath done upon earth*"; and by means of that other passage in the Gospels: "*Let us go over to Bethlehem, and let us see this Word that is come to pass, which the Lord hath shown to us.* Let us go to the church; for it is there that our supersubstantial bread is made by virtue of the sacred words which God has placed in the mouth of his priests for our consolation."

Third Article

Just as the body needs sleep to rest and ease its tired limbs, so it is necessary that the soul should have time to repose and sleep in the chaste arms of its heavenly Spouse, in order thus to repair the strength and vigour of its spiritual powers which are in a sense jaded and tired. Therefore every day I will allot a certain time to this sacred sleep,* in order that my soul, in imitation of the beloved disciple, may rest in all security upon the breast of the Saviour, upon the loving and loveable heart of him whose infinite love is the object of all loves.

Now, just as in ordinary sleep the operations of the body are so confined within it that they do not pass beyond, so also in this time of spiritual sleep my soul will gather together within itself all its faculties, so that they shall exercise no other functions but those which rightly belong to them, humbly obeying that word of the prophet: "*Rise ye after you have sitten, you that eat the bread of sorrow.*" That is to say: "O you who by the choice of your wills eat the bread of sorrow, whether by contrition for your sins or compassion for your neighbour, do not arise, do not go forth to plunge yourselves into the outer occupations of this world of misery and pain until, by the contemplation of those things that are eternal, you have found deep rest to your souls."

Fourth Article

But if, as often happens, I cannot during the day find an hour suitable for this spiritual repose, I will at least take a part of that time from my bodily rest, in order to employ it in this watchful sleep. And this is how I will manage it. Either I will remain awake a short time in bed, or, if possible, I will awake after sleeping for a while: or, perhaps, in the morning I will rise before the others, remembering what our Lord said on this subject: "*Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation.*"

Fifth Article

If God gives me the grace to awaken during the night, I will immediately rouse up my heart with these words: "*And at midnight there was a cry made: Behold the Bridegroom cometh, go ye forth to meet*

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* Meditation.

him." Then, considering the darkness of the night as representing the darkness of my soul and of all sinners, I will utter this prayer: "Lord, since the mercy of thy heart brought thee down from heaven upon the earth in order to visit us, enlighten, I beg thee, those who lie stretched in the darkness of ignorance and in the shadow of eternal death, which is mortal sin: and lead them into the path of interior peace."

I will strive to arouse myself by pronouncing those words of the Royal Prophet: "*In the night lift up your hands to the holy places and bless the Lord.*" I will do all I can to fulfil the command which he gives in the words: "*The things you say in your hearts, be sorry for them upon your beds*": and in order to accomplish this as I ought, I will imitate the Psalmist in the bitterness of his grief and *will water my couch with my tears.*

Sixth Article

I will turn from time to time towards my God and Saviour, and will say to him: "*Behold he neither slumbers nor sleeps, that keepeth Israel.* Indeed, thou dost never sleep nor even close thine eyes, O thou who keepest watch over the Israel of our souls! *For while all things were in quiet silence, and the night was in the midst of her course, thy almighty Word leapt down from heaven from thy royal throne.* The deepest darkness and the very heart of the night can place no hindrance to the divine working of thy goodness, O sweet Saviour: it was even at that very hour that thou wert born of the Blessed Virgin, thy Mother, and even at that very hour thou art able to give birth to thy heavenly grace within our souls. Ah, merciful redeemer, "*Enlighten mine eyes, that I never sleep in death: lest at any time my enemy say: I have prevailed against him.*"

Finally, having attentively considered the darkness and imperfections of my soul, I shall be able to utter those words of Isaias: "*Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night?*" And I shall hear him answering: "*The morning cometh*—the morning of good inspirations. Why dost thou *love darkness rather than the light?*"

Seventh Article

But as the fears of night often hinder such devotions, if it should happen that I feel myself attacked by them, I will free myself by thinking of my guardian angel, saying: "*The Lord is at my right hand that I be not moved*": which some doctors have explained as alluding to the guardian angel. I will also remember the verse: "*His truth shall compass thee with a shield: thou shalt not be afraid of the terror of the night.*" The shield of faith and of firm confidence in God will cover me, so that I need have fear of naught. Moreover, I will use the holy words of David: "*The Lord is my light and my salvation. Whom* *shall I fear?*" Which is just as if one were to say: "Neither the sun nor its rays are my chiefest light, nor will human companionship save me: God alone it is who has care of us, by night as much as by day."

RULES FOR THE INTERCOURSE OF SOCIAL LIFE

First Point: Distinction between Conversation and Intercourse

There is a distinction between mere conversation, such as takes place by chance, and the intercourse upon which one enters for the purpose of friendship. For conversation is a matter of chance and occasion, but intercourse a matter of choice. In conversation the companionship is not lasting; there is no kind of familiarity; and we do not engage therein our affection, any more than we expect much of such affection from others: but in intimate intercourse we see each other frequently; there is a certain friendly freedom; our affection is given to certain chosen people; and we frequent each other's society in order that we may live together in honest comradeship and in the mutual interchange of our ideas.

Second Point: Rules for General Conversation

I will never scorn, or show any sign of wishing to avoid, the company of any person whatsoever, for by so doing one earns a reputation for being proud, haughty, severe, arrogant, exclusive, ambitious, and hypercritical. I will take care on these occasions not to be hail-fellow-well-met with anyone, not even with my most intimate friends, if I should come across any in the company: for those, who might see it, would not fail to attribute it to a want of balance. I will not permit myself to say or do anything but what is absolutely correct; because I might be taxed with being impertinent, if I allow myself to indulge in over great familiarity. Above all, I will take care not to attack or irritate anyone, nor to make game of any person whatsoever: for it is sheer stupidity when, without any cause for hatred or dislike, we take to mocking those who have no reason to endure it from us. I will honour each one according to his merit or his dignity: and I will strive to bear myself with modesty. I will speak little but well, so that, instead of boring my companions, I shall rather whet their appetite for further conversation another time. If the interview be short, and if someone is already speaking, it will be sufficient for me to salute the company: and this should be done with a quiet and courteous ease, avoiding aught that is stiff or surly.

Third Point: Rules for Intercourse with Friends

As to what I have called intercourse, I will enter into friendship with but a few, and only with such as are honourable and good. For it is very difficult to profit by intercourse with many, and to avoid being dragged down by those who are evil; difficult also to maintain a good reputation unless we frequent only those who are themselves men of virtue. With regard both to conversation and friendship I will take care to observe this precept: *Be friendly with all, but intimate with few.* In all circumstances it is necessary to use judgement and prudence, for there is no rule, however general, which has not its exceptions, unless it be this one, the foundation of all others: *Nothing against God.* I will then in the daily intercourse of life strive to be modest, courteous, gentle, sympathetic, and cordial, avoiding all insolence, harshness, affectation, contradiction and pretence: for, with regard to this last, men are keen to have a real knowledge of those with whom they have to deal. One must, however, reveal oneself with prudence, sometimes more, sometimes less, according to the character of the person with whom one is dealing.

Fourth Point

As it often happens that one is obliged to associate with persons of different rank, I must not forget that to some must be shown only what is choicest, to others what is good, and to others again what is ordinary, but to nobody what is bad. Before those who are our superiors, either by their profession or their authority, we must only display what is choicest, before our equals what is good, and before our inferiors what is ordinary. As to that which is bad, we must show it to none, inasmuch as this can only offend the eyes of those who see it, and render displeasing him in whom it is found. And, in fact, the great and the wise admire only what is choice, whereas equals would attribute it to affectation, and inferiors to an excess of gravity.

There are certain persons of a melancholy temperament who love us to reveal to them our defects; but it is especially from these that we should hide our faults the more: for, having a vivid imagination nd being very impressionable, they would be quite capable of easoning and philosophizing for ten years and more upon the slightest mperfection. And then, what is the good of bringing our faults o light in this manner? Are they not visible and evident enough f themselves? It is, then, by no means advisable to exhibit them, ut it is good to acknowledge and confess them.

In spite of all that we have just said, whether we are conersing with our superiors, our equals, or our inferiors, we may vary our conversation somewhat by mingling the perfect with the good and ordinary, provided that all this is done with iscretion.

Fifth Point

If in certain cases politeness necessitates my being in the company of people who are impertinent or free or morbid, I will take this precaution: with the impertinent I shall maintain a complete reserve; to the free, provided that they have the fear of God, I shall be perfectly open and shall talk to them frankly. With regard to those who have a gloomy and morbid character, I shall, as the proverb has it, show myself only at the window; that is to say, I shall reveal myself to them in part, because they are curious to know the heart of man, and, if one is too reserved, they immediately become suspicious: but also I shall partly hide myself from them, because they are disposed to philosophize, and to examine too closely the qualities and characters of those with whom they associate.

Sixth Point

If necessity obliges me to converse with the great, it is then that I shall hold myself carefully on my guard: for one must deal with them as with fire; that is to say, it is good to approach it from time to time, but not to get too near to it. This being so, I will bear myself in their presence with great modesty, mingling therewith, however, an honest freedom. Great lords are as a rule fond of being liked and respected: love certainly produces freedom and respect modesty; there is no harm, then, in showing in their company a certain amount of freedom, provided that one does not forget the respect which is their due, and that the respect is greater than the freedom. With equals we should be equally free and respectful; with inferiors more free than respectful. But with the great and with superiors we must be much more respectful than free.

Having drawn up these rules for his conduct, Francis did not feel justified in using them until they had been submitted to the judgement of Father Possevin and M. Déage. His director and tutor gave them an immediate approval, and, acting on the advice of these two priests, he wrote out the rules in Latin on the first and last pages of a prayer-book, which he always carried about with him. Being thus continually before his eyes, they served him both as an examination of conscience and as a reminder of the resolutions, upon which he had determined to mould his daily life. This, however, was not the limit of their usefulness: for several of his companions, struck by the wisdom and practical excellence of the rules, obtained their author's leave to make copies of them. Thus they became on a small scale what the *Devout Life* was afterwards to be in a much larger sphere.

It can easily be imagined, however, that, beyond the circle of his riends, there were a number of other students for whom Francis's nanner of life was either a subject of ridicule or of actual hatred. Various attacks were made upon him, some aimed at his courage, ome at his virtue. Mistaking his gentleness and patience for a want of spirit, several of these young bloods resolved to waylay him one ight in the streets. Their idea was not so much to inflict any real njury upon him, but rather to cow him by threats of violence, ccompanied by a certain amount of rough usage, and to make him ither beg for mercy or take refuge in ignominious flight. In either ase he was to be covered with ridicule and branded as a spiritless oward. When they sprang their ambush upon him, however, nd, passing from insults and taunts, began to show signs of doing iolence to their intended victim, Francis turned the tables upon them n no uncertain style. Seeing that it was a case of lawful self-defence gainst unjust aggression, the young nobleman promptly drew his word, put himself upon his defence, and showed such familiarity vith the use of his weapon, that his attackers, in surprise and fear, vere forced to give an unwilling display of the better part of valour, nd to make an abject apology. This attempt was not repeated in ind.

The next attack was one that needed courage of another sort. Three students of his acquaintance came to Francis and told him of he arrival in Padua of a distinguished foreign professor, upon whom hey proposed to call, and they invited him to accompany them as heir spokesman. Suspecting no evil, Francis accepted their invitaion and went with them to the address they had mentioned, where he company was received by a lady who introduced herself as the vife of the professor. She explained that the professor was engaged t that moment, but that, if they would wait a little, he would then e free and would be very glad to receive them, and that in the neanwhile he had commissioned her to entertain them. The woman n reality was nothing else than a courtesan, and the whole thing an vil plot. One by one the students, on various pretexts, quitted the oom, and left Francis alone with the supposed wife of the professor. Ie was not long, however, in finding out the fictitious character of is hostess, and in discovering that an attack was being made upon his irtue. He at once indignantly repelled the woman's advances, and, nding that she persisted in her unworthy designs upon him and eeing no other way of stopping her than by provoking her to anger, e went to the length of spitting at her. At this insult the woman vas roused to fury, bursting into a torrent of foul abuse, and Francis vas enabled to free himself from her and to quit the room. In the neanwhile the conspirators, who had been spying the course of events hrough cracks in the door, and had taken to flight as soon as they w that their plot was likely to fail, were now returning to the room as if innocent of what had happened. Meeting them as he left the house, Francis made it clear to them that he saw through their duplicity, and, moved with an anger that was unexpected in one usually so gentle, left the culprits overwhelmed with shame at the sternness and justice of his rebukes.

This affair, becoming by some means public, aroused a universal admiration for M. de Villaroget, and was, strange to say, the cause of another venture against his virtue, though of a different nature. A certain princess, of a well-known family and of great wealth, having heard something of the general chorus of praise elicited by the incident just described, desired to see the young nobleman, and, having seen him, conceived for him so intense a passion as to make her lose all sense of dignity and virtue. By means of favours and rich presents she persuaded one of Francis's acquaintances to become her ambassador, and sent him with all sorts of promises, both in the matter of political favour and wealth, to M. de Villaroget in the hopes of persuading the latter to enter into an intrigue with her. The envoy, whose personal reputation was none of the best, accomplished his unworthy task as well as he could, and strove to deck out the proposed transaction in its most attractive colours. The indignation of Francis can be imagined, and the wretched go-between was driven from his presence with all the more severity and scorn, in that the acceptance of such a mission had been the betrayal of a friendship bestowed upon him in all loyalty and trust.

As a protection against temptations such as these, and in order to unite himself more thoroughly with the passion of Jesus Christ, Francis redoubled his prayers and penitential exercises. In addition to his fasting and wearing a hair-shirt three days a week, he inflicted upon himself the penance of the discipline. During Lent he still further increased his austerities and religious observances, joining with them frequent meditations on the Passion of our Lord and particularly attending those church services and confraternity meetings in which sermons on this subject were likely to be delivered. Thus we know of his presence one Maundy Thursday at an assembly, in which the members, after listening to a sermon on the scourging of Jesus Christ, extinguished the lights and inflicted on themselves the discipline as they recited the psalm *Miserere*. This fact became known by means of a foolish and irreverent practical joke, played by some of the students on this occasion.

While thus devoting himself so thoroughly to the work of his own sanctification, he continued to carry on amongst his own personal friends that quiet, efficient apostolate, which we have already seen him undertake elsewhere. Nothing pleased him better than to be able to persuade one of his companions to accompany him in his religious exercises, and he would do this with such charm and gentle tact as to rob his exhortations of all taint of officiousness. His personal humility was as transparent as his earnestness. On the other hand, he was not afraid to speak out openly and boldly when occasion required it. To one of his companions, who had made use of impious and licentious language in his presence, he turned and said: "What has God done to you that you should treat him in that way? And, on the contrary, what has he not done to induce you to behave otherwise?" The culprit felt that the rebuke was deserved, and received it in the right spirit. Long afterwards he was able to say: "Every time that I think of it, I am still filled with regret for my fault."

It is very possible that in the rigour of his austerities and in his continual application to study Francis overtaxed his bodily strength. It was noticed by his friends that he was losing his usual appearance of health, and was gradually becoming very thin and emaciated. Eventually it became evident that he was on the way to a serious illness. He could neither eat his food nor sleep, and was attacked by a slow and obstinate fever. This state of affairs continued for some time, being then still further complicated by bouts of dysentery and rheumatism. M. Déage did all he could to stop the ravages of the illness, and called in the usual medical assistance: but his pupil was soon reduced to a complete state of prostration, enduring agonies in every part of his body at the slightest movement. He bore his sickness with the greatest patience, resigning himself completely to the will of God, and never complaining: even when his sufferings became too acute to be altogether disguised, he made light of them, and would assert that they were but the just punishment of his many sins. To his attendants and doctors he showed the readiest obedience, doing just as he was told and fulfilling all their prescriptions, however disagreeable these might be. This last was no light matter, if one is to judge by some of the revelations of history: for medicine then was not as scientific and merciful as it is to-day, and many of the remedies in use were as barbarous and bizarre as they were ineffectual. M. Déage, however, could only do his best, and, seeing how critical his pupil's condition had become, he decided to call in the aid of the most celebrated doctors he could find. These, after holding a lengthy examination of the invalid, and after a consultation among themselves, declared that in view of his extreme weakness and the violence of the malady, they could hold out no prospects whatever of a cure. Poor M. Déage was completely overwhelmed with grief at the thought of the premature death which threatened his beloved pupil and of the terrible blow it would be to the father and mother who held him in such love and who entertained such high hopes for his future. But the sense of the tutor's responsibility at such a crisis came to his help, and, remembering his duty both as guardian and priest of God, he made his way to Francis's bedside, to break to him the news of the doctor's opinion as to his condition, and to prepare him for the death which seemed inevitable. Of that death there was evidently no fear on the part of the sick man. When M. Déage gently questioned him as to whether he would be fully resigned to the divine Will if God had resolved to call him away from life, he answered without hesitation and with complete understanding of what was meant: "Yes, beyond all doubt. God's will be done in death as in life. I submit myself to everything that he wishes. It is happiness for me to live with my Saviour: it is happiness for me to die with him." Then, in order to strengthen himself against the approach of death, he turned what energy was left within him to prayer and the thought of such passages of Scripture as would best help him in his need. "*The Lord is my light and my salvation. Whom shall I fear? . . . If armies in camp should stand together against me, my heart shall not fear. If a battle should rise up against me, in this will I be confident. . . . The days of man are short . . . who cometh forth like a flower, and is destroyed, and fleeth as a shadow. . . . How lovely are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! . . . I believe to see the good things of the Lord in the land of the living. . . . I expect until my change come. Thou shalt call and I will answer thee. . . . Blessed is the man whose trust is in the name of the Lord, and who hath not had regard to vanities and lying follies.*" Amidst the grief of his attendants he maintained a complete calm. M. Déage, seeing him so brave, ventured to ask him if he had any particular desires to express with regard to his funeral and the disposal of his body. The young man answered: "My dear master, I leave the care of all that to your love. And I beg you to take care of me after my death as you have done during my life. I have only one favour to ask of you: and that is that my body be given to the medical students for the purpose of dissection." Naturally M. Déage was astounded at this request, and objected to it as a dishonour to his family. "Forgive me, dear master, if I do not agree with you. It would be a great consolation for me, as I die, to think that, if I have been a useless servant during my life, I should at any rate be of some use after my death by supplying the students with a subject upon which they can work without having bought it at the cost of quarrels and murders." This was an allusion to the terrible brawls which sometimes took place at the city cemeteries. Usually the bodies of criminals and paupers were handed over by the civil authorities to the medical schools for dissection; but when these were not forthcoming, the students would resort to the horrible practice of robbing the graveyards. Knowing this, the citizens and relatives of the deceased took vigorous measures to defend their dead from profanation, and the streets and cemeteries became the scenes of sanguinary encounters and even of violent deaths. It was to aid in obviating these scandals, at least in one case, that Francis made his strange but generous request.

As death seemed so near, it was thought advisable to administer the last sacraments. Francis made his confession to Father Possevin, and then received the Viaticum and Last Anointing at the hands of the parish priest. For a short time afterwards his illness continued in its course, and he grew weaker and weaker. Then suddenly a wonderful alteration took place. At first it was feared that this improvement might possibly be only the last flicker of life which sometimes precedes death at the close of a long illness, but the welcome change continued, and before long it was evident that the invalid was on the way to a complete recovery. Little by little, to the astonishment of nurses and doctors, he regained his strength, and passed on through the stages of convalescence to complete health. The doctors were strong in their conviction that his recovery was, in the literal sense of the word, a miracle.

The first care of Francis on regaining his health was to offer up acts of thanksgiving to almighty God for his recovery, and also to thank our Lady for her prayers which, he felt sure, had been greatly responsible for the favour bestowed upon him. Then, taking his new lease of life as a gift, to be used for the glory of God, he once more resumed his former life of religion and study with renewed zest. More than ever he gave himself up to prayer and contemplation, as one who in the vision of death had seen the emptiness of things human: more and more he strove to make himself perfect in the exercise of his favourite virtues of humility, obedience, and gentleness. At the same time there was nothing extraordinary in his outward bearing, no parade of devotion or austerity: he avoided all that was singular or likely to attract attention, and bore himself always with the quiet ease of a well-bred gentleman. In spite of this, however, it would seem that God wished to mark him out in a special manner for those who had eyes to see, and gave to his mere presence a certain spiritual attraction which was experienced by many. Charles Auguste tells us that there was a certain nobleman, named the Sieur de Granges, who had conceived so great a love for Francis that, in whatever company he might be, he could talk of little else but of his praises, and that this gentleman, though never seeking the intimacy of conversation, took every opportunity of seeing him, saying that in the sight of him alone he felt a wonderful consolation. That Francis knew something of this gentleman's devotion for him is evident from one of his early letters, in which he writes: "I have reason to believe that M. des Granges loves me well, of which I have received very good proofs." The name of Jacques de Granges is found in the letters patent of the saint's doctorate amongst those of the gentlemen of Savoy who acted as witnesses thereto.

We have further testimony about Francis at this time from M. Mittel de Challes, who was then his fellow-student, and who afterwards became the First President of the Senate of Savoy at Chambéry. "Francis," he said, "practised even at that time more virtues than were needed to canonize him. And I myself have a special proof that he already possessed the gift of prophecy. One day, when we were talking together about our vocations, he said to me: 'Brother, God has created you for the married state; that is your lot. And in that state you will be blessed by heaven, both you and your children.' Which, in fact, is what has happened to me. 'But you, brother,' I answered, 'you say nothing about your own vocation.' 'As for me,' he said simply, 'I am not called to the world. God has destined me for the altar.'"*

It was at Padua that Francis first conceived his great admiration for that celebrated book, *The Spiritual Combat.* He had received a copy of it from its author, Father Scupoli, who had come from Venice to Padua in 1589, and he adopted it as his favourite book. "*The Spiritual Combat*," he wrote in 1607, "is my favourite book, which I have carried in my pocket for quite eighteen years; and I never read it without profit."†

In the meanwhile he was ever vigorously pursuing his studies. Thoroughness of execution was still his motto. Storing knowledge in his memory was not enough for him: he meditated on what he learnt, reasoned it out, discussed it with his companions, revised it in the light thrown upon it by each new master and professor. His writings on jurisprudence and theology at Padua formed no less than a dozen quarto volumes, which were preserved for a long time in his family. Dom Mackey's remarks on these compositions of the Saint at Padua are so interesting that they merit quoting almost in full. He says that there still exist three monuments of the progress which Francis made in the sciences and in sanctity during the period of Padua. After mentioning the *Rule of Conduct*, the learned Benedictine continues:

"One cannot find direct traces of the studies of Francis of Sales in Canon Law, although their influence makes itself felt almost at every page of his writings. . . . As to Civil Law, there exists an analysis of his in Latin of the *Pandects*, commenced about the end of 1590 and terminated on July 10, 1591: it is followed by an analysis of seven books of the Code. This is the second of the works mentioned above. The notes are brief, but they show a minute consideration of the text and of the gloss: he adds remarks thereon of the ancient commentators, those of his actual professors, and certain parallels between the Canon Law and 'the *Controversies* of the great Bellarmine.' One often comes across a sentence of judicious criticism and oftener still a remark which, in the midst of these cold annotations, is quite an inner revelation of the Saint's soul. Thus here and there an exclamation escapes him: such as an act of praise to God, 'the infallible, first and eternal Rule, the only correct Rule of all good and of all law.' At each principal division of his subject he invokes the Blessed Virgin, his guardian angel and his patron saints; he writes out in full the proofs for the authority of the Pope, for the honour due to the Cross, for the detestation of heresy; and at the end of such pages he exclaims: 'Look, O heretics!' or 'Behold, Iconoclasts!' His instinctive sympathy for the material interests of humanity and for the great questions of public morality is shown with no less keenness: after having noted the severe penalties reserved for oppressors, exploiters, corrupters of youth, he adds, 'A golden title!' or again, 'A title to be written in capitals!' Often he recalls with profound pity the religious dissensions of poor France, torn by the struggles for the succession to the throne.

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* Dep. Mother de Chaugy.

† E.N., Tom. XIII, Lettre 406.

"The third work of this period of the studies of Francis . . . is the *Observationes Theologicæ*, begun at Paris. At the moment of the process *De non cultu* of 1648 six copybooks of his notes, 'written in extremely minute characters,' were presented for examination. These had been drawn from the archives of the first monastery of the Visitation at Annecy. The examiners contented themselves with taking a few extracts, as the notary remarked that 'it would take six months to copy the whole.' To-day only these extracts and a few fragments of the original remain: these treat exclusively of the questions of grace and predestination, and they are of the highest interest. Some of these observations were suggested to the pious student by the lessons of his masters and directors; the greater part are the fruit of his own reflections. 'What is placed between inverted commas I had from Father Gesualdo: the rest I meditated myself before the Lord.' Further on is found this striking remark: 'All this I have written for the honour of God and the salvation of souls. . . .' The following lines, drawn from another copybook, form a fitting termination to this short outline of the education of our Saint; they show how deeply faith and humility had taken root in his soul, and how intensely serious was the spirit that ruled all his studies: 'These things I have written with fear and trembling, in the year 1590, on the 5th of December, being ready to abandon not only the conclusions which I have drawn or shall draw, but even the very head which has conceived them, in order to embrace the opinion which is or which will be adopted in the future by the Catholic, Apostolic and Roman Church, my Mother and the *pillar of truth;* and never will I say aught else, so long as God gives me understanding, but what will be most conformable with the Catholic Faith. *For I have believed, therefore have I spoken* and not I have spoken, therefore I have believed; which amounts to saying: Faith must be the rule of belief; but humility should be the rule of everything, and *I am humbled exceedingly*. Amen, amen. The first month of the pontificate of our most holy Lord, Gregory XIV.' "*

As soon as his full course of studies was finished, Francis, in obedience to his father's wishes, made his application to the authorities of the University to take his degree as Doctor of Laws. This was in the beginning of September, 1591, and he was at the time twenty-four years of age. It was, of course, necessary for him to undergo his examination, which was to be an oral one, in the presence of the public. Pancirola, his professor and promoter, holding him in the highest esteem, wished to give the occasion as much solemnity as was possible. An assembly of forty-eight doctors was gathered together, presided over by Pancirola himself, and still further graced by the presence of the Bishop of the diocese. Francis passed through his examination with conspicuous success, answering all the questions put to him by the examiners and solving all difficulties suggested to him with clearness and accuracy.

The examination finished, Pancirola then addressed him: "I have been looking forward to the day on which I should see you decorated with the insignia of the doctorate as one of the happiest days of my life, and I hold myself fortunate in being able to preside at the ceremony itself. Others there are who would have acquitted themselves of this function with more honour to the University, but no one could have done so with greater love for yourself. That love is inspired within me by your virtue, which is on a level with the knowledge which you have shown, and by the qualities of your heart, which rivals in purity the brilliance of your mind. One cannot love virtue without loving you. Humane, charitable, compassionate, even to the length of bequeathing your body to the public welfare when you saw yourself at the gates of death, you have shown yourself still more eminent for your chastity: and thanks to the piety which guards that virtue within you, you have kept yourself pure in the midst of a licentious town, like the fountain of Arethusa which, in mingling its waters with the sea, loses not its sweetness. In fine, the sincere horror of all that is evil, the constant practice of all that is good, are joined in you with the most noble and generous sentiments, and, above all, with the most genuine piety: these are the virtues which heaven now rewards by the glory you receive to-day."

Upon the conclusion of this address, Francis, turning towards the Bishop of Padua and the doctors assembled, answered as follows: "Most Reverend Lord Bishop, venerable prior and you, conscript fathers; although I realize fully how much it behoves me to render you the deepest thanks for the signal favour you have conferred upon me to-day, yet, considering your comfort rather than my own honour, I would have abstained willingly from fulfilling this duty of my gratitude: and this because I know, not only that I am unequal to performing it in a manner befitting the occasion, but also that you on your part, on account of the exacting nature of your occupations, can with difficulty spare me your valuable time. But it also seemed to me that my silence upon such an occasion would be as much a reflection upon your honour as upon my own. For if this noble assembly were forced to judge me so frivolous, so ungrateful, so senseless as not to recognize the greatness of the present favour, what kind of judges would they declare you to be, who but now have passed upon me so favourable a sentence?

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* Dom Mackey, *Introduction Générale aux Œuvres*, E.N., Tom. I, p. xlv *et seq.*

"I will forestall, therefore, the possibility of such a judgement either against you or against myself, and I acknowledge, noble sirs, that the favour conferred upon me by these most excellent fathers is such that one can hope for no greater in this mortal life. For all other decorations are but the adjuncts, as it were, of the body and of fortune; but this of the doctorate lends grace to virtue itself, that virtue which is in turn the fairest of all decorations: and I hold this gift to be the greater and more splendid in that not only the crown, but the laurel of which it is made, has been conferred upon me by this University; that is to say, not only has it declared me doctor, but it has also afforded me the means of making myself worthy to become one.

"True it is that my own beloved country bestowed on me, in addition to the gifts of nature, the elements of letters, and when I had received these, the best of fathers, with the hope of seeing me one day more learned, sent me to the University of Paris, in those days so much frequented and so prosperous. Alas! How times are changed! That illustrious school, the mother of letters, now languishes beneath the terrors of war, and is face to face with a desolation which we pray God to avert. In the first years of my sojourn there I gave myself diligently to the study of literature, then afterwards to that of general philosophy, and in this latter my work was the easier and the more fruitful in that those schools are so given up to their sciences that the very roofs and walls seem as though they would philosophize.

"Up to then I had not studied the sacred science of law: but as soon as I had decided to apply myself to that study, I had little need of counsel to determine where I should learn it and in what direction I should turn my steps for this purpose. This University of Padua drew me hither at once by the greatness of its renown; and that evidently under the most favourable auspices, for at this time it possessed doctors and professors who are like to be without rival in the future as they have been without equal in the past."

Then followed the usual rather elaborate compliments of usage, addressed to each of his professors, Pancirola, Menochio, Mattheaci, and others. After which he continued:

"It is from almost all these great masters and from your celebrated Academy, Fathers, that I have drawn that knowledge of Civil Law which you have declared to be sufficient for admission to the doctorate by your judgement of to-day—a judgement possessing the force of law and irrevocable. I have then received from this school two favours, both so great that I know not which is greater, the reception of the doctorate itself and the education which has made me capable of obtaining it.

"Hence it is that both the occasion and the place demand the strongest expression of gratitude that is within my power. But since I have not eloquence enough to describe the worth of such a favour, and since neither have you the leisure for a longer discourse, I beg of you to be satisfied with this protestation which I now make in the presence of this noble assembly, a protestation which comes from the very depths of my heart. I here acknowledge and declare that whatever worth I may claim to possess, I owe it entirely, noble sirs, to this most illustrious college of doctors.

"To thee, O Christ, immortal God, to the ever-glorious Mary, to my guardian angel, to blessed Francis, whose name I rejoice to bear, be praise, honour, benediction, and thanks! Do thou, O Eternal Law, the standard of all law, *set before me for a law the way of thy justifications:* since *blessed is he whom thou dost enlighten, O Lord, and to whom thou dost teach thy law.*

"And now it only remains for me to beg of you, Pancirola, my most renowned and honoured master, to bestow upon me with your pure and kindly hands the insignia which the University is used to grant to those whom she has made her alumni, ere she finally bids them farewell."

After this speech Pancirola bestowed upon the new graduate the ring and the privileges of the University. As he placed upon Francis's head the wreath and doctor's cap, he uttered these words: "The University is happy to find in you all those qualities of mind and heart which it can desire. And this happiness is made complete by the fact that the testimony of esteem which it gives you, in admitting you to the number of its doctors, has the unstinted approval of all those who are judges of real merit."

With the applause which greeted these words the session came to an end. Then, as a final mark of their regard, all the members of the company, doctors and students alike, escorted Francis in triumph through the streets from the hall of the assembly to the door of his home.

CHAPTER V*

(1591–1593)

Journey to Loretto and Rome—Return home—Francis is received as advocate in the Senate of Chambéry—Visit to Mgr. de Granier—The portent of the forest of Sonnaz—Francis appointed Provost of the Chapter—Obtains his father's permission to become a cleric—Minor Orders and Subdiaconate—First sermon—Beginning of friendship with Antoine Favre—Refuses senatorship—Founds Confraternity of the Cross—Ordained deacon and priest

IT is worth while noticing what a keen interest Francis took in the religious and political condition of France. This is evident from the notes mentioned by Dom Mackey, from one or two passages in his letters, and from his speech before the doctors of the University of Padua. During the whole time of his stay at this city France had been passing through the most troubled times. The country was divided into three factions, the Huguenots, the Catholic royalists supporting King Henry III, and the Catholics of the League. The last party owed its formation mainly to the fact that the crown was likely to pass, on the death of Henry III, the last of the Valois, to Henry of Bourbon, King of Navarre, who was the leader of the Huguenots, and partly also to a political alliance between these two princes. The League, headed by the Duke of Guise, had its stronghold in Paris, and for a long time was regarded as the only hope for Catholics. It is very probable that the sympathies of Francis were mostly, if not entirely, with this party, of which his former master, the great Génébrard, was a stalwart champion. At the time when M. de Villaroget received his doctorate things must have looked as gloomy as possible. The murder of the Duke of Guise by Henry III, and that king's assassination in his turn by a fanatic monk a short time afterwards, gave Henry of Navarre a strong position and placed him legally upon the throne of France. The Parisians, however, and the great nobles of the League, refused to acknowledge him, and Henry, on two separate occasions, after the victories of Arques and Ivry, laid vigorous siege to the city, which had to endure all the horrors of war and famine. It was probably to one of these sieges that Francis made allusion in his speech. Meanwhile the state of France was pitiable in the extreme, and its unity as a kingdom threatened. From outside it was menaced by the Spaniards; within it was torn by furious factions. The Huguenots wished to have towns of their own, probably with the intention of forming them into republics on the model of Geneva. The great lords, the governors of the various provinces, were like so many little kings, each of them possessing a small army of trained fighting men, and caring little for the central authority of the new king. Many of the towns governed themselves, independently of the interests of their neighbours. The condition of the country districts was terrible: numbers of the villages had been completely destroyed; agriculture was almost impossible; famine and plague made unchecked ravages; and the peasants were either at the mercy of armed freebooters or in a state of savage and vengeful revolt. It is estimated that more than a million men had perished since the beginning of the religious wars, and murder was so frequent, and received such high patronage, as to have become for the time a national habit. Well might Francis write in one of his letters: "I know not what God wills to do with France, for its sins are very great." It was not till 1593, when Henry IV decided to declare himself a Catholic, that any chance of a permanent peace was visible.

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* Hamon, l. i, chap. 5.

As the object for which Francis had come to Padua was now attained it was time for him to return to his home in Savoy. Before doing so, however, he communicated with his father and asked permission to visit Rome, Loretto and other towns in Italy. As a reward for the successful issue of his studies and as a further means of education, his father, though more and more anxious to see him, gave the desired leave. His brother Gallois, who had been with him for some time lately, M. Déage and Georges Rolland were to accompany him. When Francis made the customary round of farewell visits to his friends and to all those to whom he was in any way indebted, his tutor asked him whether he had visited the lady to whom he owed the most. Francis understood the allusion at once, and answered: "I will go immediately and tell her how utterly grateful I am." He then made his way to a neighbouring church, and passed two hours before the altar of our Lady in prayer and thanksgiving. On his return to the house he said: "And now let us set out as soon as you like. I have thanked her to whom I owed the most." The party left Padua on October 8, 1591, going to Venice, in order to sail from there to Ancona. From Ancona they passed to Loretto. We are not concerned here with the vexed question as to the veracity of the legend which avers that the holy house of Loretto was the very building in which our Lady received the favour of the Annunciation, in which the Holy Family afterwards lived, and which, according to the tradition, was transferred by angelic power from Palestine, at the time of the Turkish conquest, first to Dalmatia and then to Italy. The matter has been discussed, and is still discussed, with much vehemence by the learned critics and equally learned supporters of the ancient tradition. Certain it is that no doubt on the point entered the mind of Francis, and his going to Loretto was no archæological visit, but a pilgrimage undertaken in fulfilment of a vow which he had once made, and which he had been unable to accomplish until now. "Scarcely had he knelt in this wonderful sanctuary," says Father de la Rivière, "than, as if he had entered a burning furnace, he felt himself inflamed with extraordinary charity." Meditating upon the mystery of the Incarnation and of the life of our Lord and his mother in the house of Nazareth, his heart was fired with love, and his ardour sought expression in the figurative language of the Canticle of Canticles, that he loved so well: "These, then, O fair Spouse of the Eternal King, are your *beams of cedar* and your *rafters of cypress tree.* It was behind these walls, O divine love, that you one day stood, *looking through the windows, looking through the lattices:* and it was here that you *fed among the lilies until the day broke and the shadows retired.* It was in this place, O Lord, that you became my brother: and would that I might have the happiness of finding you without, borne at the breasts of my Mother, and that I might kiss you, free from the world's contempt. O God, *you have taught me since my youth:* but I ask you to teach me here still more. . . ."

Having received the sacraments of penance and Holy Eucharist, Francis renewed his vow of chastity, consecrating himself once more with the greatest fervour to the service of the incarnate Word and of his blessed Mother. It is certain that on this occasion he received extraordinary graces from heaven. As he was praying before the Sanctuary, he seemed wrapt in an ecstasy, his face was transfused with a strange ruddiness and appeared to shine with a supernatural light. M. Déage, amongst several others, was a witness of this incident, and he bore away with him from Loretto a still higher idea of the sanctity of his pupil and of the great future for which Providence had marked him.

After their visit to Loretto the travellers had intended to continue their journey, but, learning that the roads of the Apennines were infested by brigands, they returned to Padua, and passed the winter in that city.

On January 21 or 22, 1592, Francis, M. Déage and Georges Rolland left Padua on their way to Rome. They reached their destination safely, and at once began their pilgrimage to all those places which had attained celebrity in the history of the Church, such as the Coliseum, the basilica of St Peter, then still unfinished, the old basilica of St Paul without the walls, St Mary Major and other churches. All these were visited in a spirit of religion, and Francis was deeply moved before the shrines of the martyrs, in whose blood the early Church was founded. Naturally, also, the ancient classic monuments of Rome received their attention, but upon these Francis gazed with quite different eyes: as he viewed the triumphal arches, the remains of temple, forum, bath, and theatre, the thought of the vanity of human greatness came strongly to his mind. "Of what use now are these triumphal arches, these baths of Antony and Diocletian, these columns, pyramids, galleries, theatres, these stones eaten away by old age, these circuses and trophies, these tombs, and towers? Alas! how vain are the works of man, when they are not reared for the glory of God! These poor men carved their names upon stone, and thought that this alone was immortality. *They have received their cities in vain. They have trusted in their chariots and horses: but we, we will call upon the name of the Lord our God.*" Then passing from the thought of these ancient kings, consuls, and emperors, he turned his mind to the contemplation of the Sovereign Pontiffs, the successors of St Peter, the Vicars of Jesus Christ, and again the words of the Psalmist came up to his lips: "*But to me thy friends, O God, are made exceedingly honourable: their principality is exceedingly strengthened.*"

A short time before Francis left Rome an incident occurred which, but for an apparent chance, must have cost him his life. He had taken lodgings in a house which was situated on a bank of the Tiber: the landlord, either on account of a previous engagement, or for the sake of entertaining more honourable guests, asked him to give up his rooms to certain noble lords who had just arrived in the Holy City and to seek lodgings elsewhere. Francis had no alternative but to obey, and left the house on the day desired: that very night the Tiber, swollen by continual rains, washed away a great part of the bank with that suddenness which has often made its vicinity so dangerous. The house of the unfortunate landlord was swept away by the flood, and all those sleeping within it were drowned without any chance of rescue.

Soon after this event Francis and his companions left Rome, and passing through Spoleto and Macerata, visited Loretto for a second time. From Loretto they went on to Ancona, intending to embark there for Venice on their homeward journey. Here they found a felucca which was engaged to set sail in a short time, and, approaching the captain, they obtained places on board. This, it turned out, was an infringement of contract on the part of the vessel's owner: for in a short time a Neapolitan lady of high rank came to the felucca with her retinue, and seeing others upon the deck, addressed the captain in great anger, protesting that, whereas he had agreed that none but herself and her servants should have the use of the boat, he had nevertheless taken others on board. She immediately gave orders that all strangers should disembark. Francis made his way towards her, and courteously begged her permission that his small party of three might be allowed the privilege of remaining on board, promising that they would take up but little room, and would be careful to cause no inconvenience. But the lady was obdurate, and haughtily commanded that he and his companions should leave the ship at once. Francis, accepting the inevitable, obeyed with his usual gentleness, and went on shore with the hope of finding a passage elsewhere. While they were on land watching the felucca speeding on its way from the harbour, a sudden storm arose, the sea was lashed to fury, and before the sailors could shorten sail, the heavily canvassed ship capsized, to the horror of Francis and the other onlookers, with the loss of all on board.

The storm was apparently of short duration, for soon afterwards Francis and his companions embarked on board another felucca, bound for the port of Catolica. As soon as they had left the shore at some distance, Francis turned to his tutor and reminded him that they still had a certain amount of their Office to say. "Let us pray to God," he said, "lest we also should be overwhelmed by some storm." Accordingly, while the other travellers were talking, singing, and amusing themselves as best they could, these two retired to a quiet corner, and began to say their breviary. While they were thus engaged, the wind rose anew, and the navigation of the frail craft was rendered difficult and perilous. This misfortune enraged the captain of the boat to such an extent that he showed a disposition to vent his ill-humour on anybody and anything within reach. His whim chose to single out the two men who were engaged with their Office, and, coming up to them, he interrupted their prayers with abuse and foul language. "Here," he cried out, "you Frenchmen, what are you mumbling about over there? Since you have had those breviaries in your hands the wind has got worse and worse against us. So come now, drop them and behave as others do." M. Déage, whose courage was as quick as his temper, was not inclined to take this unwarranted attack in the spirit of meekness, but Francis managed to calm him. "Master," he said, "this is not the time to answer. We must excuse the man his roughness for the present, and, when the weather calms, we shall be in a better position to correct him." Later on, when the wind died down, the young nobleman took his opportunity, and spoke to the captain with that quiet courtesy which was habitual to him. "Why was it, captain," he asked, "that, when the wind and sea were against us, when you were even n great danger of death, you blasphemed and cursed God so horribly? And why try to prevent us praying, when you ought rather to have urged us to implore God's help the more?" The man tried to put he matter off with a laugh. "Oh well," he said, "as to that, if we ailors had the patience you preach, we should all be saints." "Nay," said Francis, "it is no matter for laughter. You should put your hope of safety in God alone, and henceforward strive to behave with greater gentleness and moderation." The justice of the rebuke and the manner in which it was conveyed produced their effect upon the rough sailor, and a marked change was afterwards noticed in his manner towards his passengers.

From Catolica they again took boat to Venice. During this voyage there occurred one of those incidents which one can find only in the lives of the saints, and which rarely escape misunderstanding, and even scorn, on the part of anti-religious critics. The felucca was sailing not far from the shore, when it passed by a little chapel dedicated to our Lady and held in great veneration by the seamen of those parts. Whilst our travellers were gazing at this building and discussing its history, one of the ropes, handled by a sailor, caught Francis's cap and threw it into the sea. M. Déage, in one of his sudden tempers, soundly rated both the sailor and the young nobleman. Francis took the accident and the rating good-humouredly, exculpated the sailor from blame, ascribed the loss to his own carelessness, and remarked that at the worst the damage could be repaired at the cost of a crown. For some reason or other this remark seems to have angered his tutor beyond limit. M. Déage immediately retorted: "Indeed! Then you shall do penance for your carelessness, and you can protect your head from the cold as best you can." Francis made no answer, and, for want of a better covering, put on his night-cap, taking no account of the amusement of his fellow-travellers at this unusual headgear. On their arrival at Chiosa, the young man expected that M. Déage would loosen the purse-strings and buy him a hat: but his tutor, whether from a continuance of ill-temper or a real desire to test his pupil's humility, proposed to do nothing of the sort, and even exposed M. de Villaroget to the ridicule of the crowd by taking him ashore and walking him about the town, his head still covered by the night-cap. Eventually, after re-embarking, they reached Venice, and here M. Déage allowed his pupil to buy the much-needed hat: even so Francis had to pass through the crowd in the public squares of the great city in his penitential attire. One can imagine the laughter and mockery that greeted the young nobleman, clad in his gentleman's dress with his sword at his side, but wearing on his head his amazing night-cap. All through the episode Francis maintained his calmness, and showed not the slightest resentment either against his tutor or the people who laughed at him. It is difficult, however, to absolve M. Déage from blame for his share in the matter.

At Venice they stayed for a few days, visiting the various points of interest and admiring the beauties of this unique city. Here again, in the case of a young gentleman of Savoy, Francis found an opportunity of exercising his lay apostolate. Having heard that this acquaintance of his had fallen into a grievous sin against morality, Francis took the matter in hand, reproached the culprit with his infidelity against almighty God, and persuaded him to set the matter right in the sacred tribunal of penance.

The term of their journeyings was now, however, approaching. Francis and his tutor were recalled homewards by M. de Boisy, and they set out for Savoy by way of Verona, Mantua, Cremona, Pavia, Milan, Turin, and the Mont Cenis. They eventually reached the château of La Thuille, where the family was then residing, in the summer of 1592.

Great was the joy of M. and Mme. de Boisy on seeing their son once more. They knew how greatly he had distinguished himself in taking his doctorate at Padua, and the reports of their friends had given further testimony to the general excellence of his character and to the high reputation he had acquired amongst all those who knew him well. Now at last, after their long years of waiting, they were able to see him for themselves, to admire him for the distinction of his presence, and to experience that personal charm which had gained for him so many friends. They knew that he had distinguished himself as an eloquent speaker in public: now they were able to discover that he was no less interesting and attractive in his conversation. Yet along with his culture and learning there still remained his humility: there was no parade, no display of superiority, no self-assertiveness. His external attitude towards his parents, born of his deep reverence and love, was full of respect, obedience, and consideration.

It need scarcely be said that M. de Boisy entertained the highest ambitions for his son. He at once assigned to him the lordship or manor of Villaroget, insisting that Francis should continue to bear that name in the future as he had done during his student days. Guests were invited to La Thuille to meet him, and Charles Auguste tells us that the whole neighbourhood hastened to the château for this purpose. One can imagine that for a short time M. de Boisy, who was ever well known for his hospitality, opened his doors still wider than usual, and that a certain increase of social life and amusement marked the return of the eldest son to his home.

As soon as this period was finished, and when Francis was rested from his studies and travels, his father desired him to go to Annecy, n order to pay his respects to the Bishop of Geneva, who resided in hat city. This bishop was Mgr. Claude de Granier, an ecclesiastic of great worth, who had done an admirable work at a time of immense difficulty. We cannot do better than give St Francis's own description of this prelate, written in his preface to the ritual of Geneva in 603: "Ange Justiniani had as his successor Claude de Granier, of blessed memory, beloved of God and of his fellow-men, who, because of his straightforward simplicity, his gentleness and piety, was led by divine Providence in a wonderful manner, was blessed in all his works, and was finally associated with the saints in glory. There is nothing good or beautiful in this diocese which we do not owe to this great Bishop. He it was who persuaded his clergy so effectually yet so gently to adopt the Roman Breviary, corrected in accordance with the will of the Council of Trent. He it was who, first among the Bishops of the provinces of Gaul, established the excellent custom of appointing priests to his parishes according to the result of competitive examination: in so doing he conformed himself to the decree of the Council of Trent, the most useful and holy decree that can be imagined, and thus gave to other prelates an example worthy of imitation. He succeeded in re-introducing among his priests, as far as circumstances permitted, the proper simplicity of clerical dress. Everywhere he founded devout confraternities in honour of the Blessed Sacrament and of our Lady: and he re-established the custom of holding the annual synod. In the different quarters of the diocese he appointed ecclesiastical inspectors, to whom he gave the power and duty of educating the other priests, of admonishing them, and of watching over their conduct. In a word, he omitted nothing, as far as the unhappiness of the times allowed, to bring back church discipline to the former level of its fairest days." "He was a man," wrote St Francis in a letter to Clement VIII, "who resembled the ancient fathers in his conduct, in his piety, and in his unshakable constancy."*

In obedience, therefore, to his father's wishes, Francis made his way to Annecy, and sought audience of the Bishop. The latter afterwards gave testimony as to his impressions at the first sight of the young nobleman. He felt himself "supernaturally inclined not only to a very special affection, but even to a great sentiment of veneration."† Consequently the Bishop received Francis with great honour, made his guest sit down beside him, and talked with him at some length about his life and studies in Italy. The prelate was so delighted with the answers and conversation of M. de Villaroget that he wished to keep the latter with him still longer. It so happened, however, that at twelve o'clock he was engaged to preside over a *concursus*, in which the candidates for a certain vacancy in one of the parishes were to be interrogated by the examining doctors. The Bishop invited Francis to attend this *concursus*, and arranged for him to be seated by his own side as the guest of honour. During the course of the examination a question arose about which the examiners were not agreed, and a discussion amongst the doctors continued for some time without arriving at any definite conclusion.

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* E.N., Tom. XII, Lettre clxv, p. 127.

† Dep. of Bouvard.

At length the bishop, turning to Francis, addressed him, saying: "You would greatly oblige the whole of this assembly, sir, if you would kindly tell us your opinion on this matter." Francis at first begged to be excused: he pleaded that he was too young and too much of a novice in such matters to venture an opinion in the presence of so many well-known doctors and before so great a prelate; the question, moreover, was one which was not exactly within his province. The Bishop, however, insisted courteously that Francis should give his opinion, and the latter had no choice but to obey. In as few words as would serve he resumed the various points of the discussion, distinguished between the opinions held, and gave such excellent solutions of the difficulty that the whole assembly, in admiration at the solid learning he showed, concurred unanimously with his judgement. One cannot help dwelling on the picture thus thrown up to the imagination: the young nobleman in his lay dress, wearing his sword at his side, standing near the Bishop's chair, and speaking to the company with a youthful diffidence that marked his respect, while the doctors and clergy listened in admiration and surprise. At the end of the *concursus*, when Francis took his leave, the Bishop accompanied him to the lowest step of the palace stairway, an honour, we are told, that he paid to very few.

As soon as Mgr. de Granier had regained his room, he turned to those of his household who happened to be there, and said: "What do you think of that young nobleman? He will one day become a great man, and will succeed me in this bishopric."* These words were no chance utterance, but, as the prelate himself afterwards affirmed, the expression of a strong spiritual conviction that came to him overwhelmingly in a spirit of prophecy. They were the more remarkable in that they were spoken of one who was to all appearance a layman, and who was destined by his parents for a civil career.

M. de Boisy, in fact, was hastening on the accomplishment of his plans. Soon after Francis's return to La Thuille, his father called him apart, and spoke to him about the future. "Francis," he said, "since you are the eldest of your brothers, you will one day have to be their support; and consequently you must aim at obtaining one of those positions in life such as are always open to a well-educated man of your rank. As you know, our ancestors have bequeathed to our house, with God's favour, numerous quarterings to the family escutcheon and an illustrious descent, but in the matter of revenues they have left us but moderately well-off. It is in your power, if you wish, to bring us both the one and the other. On my part, though I am not very rich, I will never fail you: only, you must co-operate with me and must follow my advice. I shall keep my eyes open, in order to find you a position such as will be worthy of you. In the meanwhile your mother and I, after having considered everything, judge it necessary that you should go to Chambéry, and be called as an advocate by the Senate."*

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* Dep. of Canon Gard, Bouvard and F. Favre.

In consequence of this wish of his father Francis, accompanied by M. Déage, set out for Chambéry. He bore letters of recommendation from M. de Boisy to Antoine Favre, the celebrated lawyer, and to Raymond Pobel, the Second President of the Senate. It would appear that Antoine Favre was absent from Chambéry at this time: certain it is that Francis did not see him personally, as we know from one of his letters. It was Raymond Pobel, therefore, who presented him to the Senate, and that body appointed the senators Crassus and Passier as his examiners. This examination he passed with great distinction, and received so honourable a report that the Senate declared for his acceptance by a unanimous vote. On November 24, 1592, therefore, in the course of a solemn session, he was received and declared as an advocate of the Senate of Savoy. The speech by which he thanked the assembly, and which contained an eloquent panegyric of the virtue of justice, made a great impression upon his audience. President Pobel, especially, professed the greatest admiration for the young lawyer's learning and eloquence, and declared several times that he had never received a more talented candidate during the whole course of his office.

It was on the young nobleman's return from Chambéry, while he was riding through the forest of Sonnaz, that occurred an event which had the greatest influence upon his career. As he and M. Déage were passing over a rough piece of road, the horse which Francis was riding stumbled and fell, bringing its rider down with it. When the young man recovered his feet, he found that his scabbard had fallen from his belt, and that the sword, slipping from its sheath, now formed with it upon the ground a perfect cross. As Francis was not in the least given to noticing such portents, he made no remark about it, but, fastening his sword on more securely, resumed his journey. A short time afterwards, on a more level stretch of way, his horse stumbled again, and again the sword and scabbard fell upon the ground in the shape of a cross. Naturally the young man was struck by this coincidence, but nevertheless continued his journey without comment. But when the same thing happened a third time, he became convinced that the whole incident was a warning from heaven that God willed him to leave his state as a layman, of which the sword was a sign, and to enroll himself under the standard of the Cross. This conviction he at once communicated to M. Déage, who had been a witness of the phenomenon. "I do not believe," he said, "that God is calling me to the world. I have a deep aversion to it. But he wishes me to serve him in the ecclesiastical state and to rally souls to him under the standard of the Cross. That, indeed, has for a long time been my fixed desire: and I am only awaiting my father's consent to put it into execution." M. Déage was considerably embarrassed by this declaration. On the one hand, he must have realized the strength of the evidence in favour of his pupil's vocation: on the other hand, he knew how firmly fixed were M. de Boisy's plans with regard to Francis, and, foreseeing the strength of his patron's opposition, was by no means anxious to take upon himself any responsibility in the matter. Nevertheless, he discussed it fully with his pupil, and, while thus engaged, they arrived at the château of La Thuille.

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* Pérennès, chap. xii, vol. i.

M. de Boisy was delighted to hear of his son's success at Chambéry, and became more and more preoccupied with his plans for Francis's advancement in the world. These plans were mainly centred about two ideas, that of obtaining for him an honourable and lucrative position, and of arranging his marriage with some lady of noble birth and well-rounded heritage. But, as we have seen, Francis had quite other ideas in his mind, and, in order to put these on their way to accomplishment, he decided to take his mother into his confidence. Mme. de Boisy cannot have been altogether astonished on learning his ambitions, but, in order to test his vocation, she at first gently opposed him. Then, when she had satisfied her mind that his vocation was genuine, she approved of his design and promised to help him by every means in her power. She even had secretly made for him a cassock and everything that was needed for his clerical dress.

In addition to his mother, Francis also took into his confidence his cousin, Louis de Sales, who had been a companion of his studies at La Roche, Annecy, and Paris, and was now a Canon of the cathedral chapter. Francis begged him to use his influence with M. de Boisy in the matter. The Canon was delighted at the idea of his cousin's vocation to the priesthood, and promised his help: but he strongly advised Francis not to rush matters, to seek out an opportune moment for telling M. de Boisy of his desires, and for the present to keep the matter secret.

It must be admitted, however, that this counsel led to one or two awkward predicaments for M. de Villaroget. His father was very anxious to see him settled in the married state, and had already chosen the young lady whom he deemed a fit consort for his son. This was a Mlle. Françoise de Suchet, the daughter of Jean, Sgr. de Végy, a counsellor of the Duke of Savoy. With a view to opening up negotiations M. de Boisy desired Francis to accompany him on a visit to the parents of this lady at Sallanches, where the family of Suchet was then resident. Though very much disturbed at the prospect, Francis, not wishing to anger his father, obeyed his commands. He therefore accompanied M. de Boisy to Sallanches, but with a definite policy in his mind as to how he should behave. He was careful to restrict himself to the ordinary duties of politeness, to appear cold rather than its opposite, and to avoid giving any sign that he regarded the occasion other than as a simple visit of courtesy. Naturally M. de Boisy, who had not the key to this conduct, was very much upset, and reproached his son keenly for not trying to fulfil his wishes. Francis listened to his father's complaints in silence, and for the time the matter ended. M. de Boisy was, however, a determined man, and a second visit was arranged. It was no more successful in its results than the first, and the poor father must have been in a state of vexed despair, for Francis had maintained the same reserve. Indeed, the younger man's mind was becoming more and more decided as to his future career. On returning from this second visit, he chanced to meet one of his friends, Amed Bouvard, priest of La Thuille, and to him he exposed the difficulty of the position. "My only joy is the word which our Lord has given me to hear in my soul. *I will enter into the house of the Lord. This is my rest for ever and ever: here will I dwell, for I have chosen it.* In order to obey my father, I have seen the lady whom his goodness intended for me: she certainly possesses every kind of quality and virtue, and deserves a better husband than I should be. For my own part, I feel that God is my inheritance for ever: I do not want, and have never wanted, anything but to be an ecclesiastic."*

About this time Francis, in addition to the trouble of his own vocation, had to help in solving that of his favourite brother, Louis. It seems that for a time Louis had been destined for the priesthood, but a doubt had entered his mind as to whether this was really his vocation. Accordingly he consulted his elder brother upon the point, told him of his attraction towards a life in the world, and of the lessening of his inclination for the ecclesiastical ministry. Francis would willingly have seen his brother become a priest along with himself, but, knowing that all states are established for the good of society, and that one can best save one's soul in that life to which one is called, judged the matter impartially, and advised the young man to follow his inclination, to perfect himself in all those exercises and duties suitable to a young nobleman, and to attach himself to the court of the Duke of Nemours, who then resided at the château of Annecy. But he urged him at the same time to show himself openly a faithful Christian, and to observe rigorously the laws of God and the Church. Louis followed his brother's advice, and bore himself so well in his new life that the Prince himself, edified by his conduct, proposed him as a model to the rest of the court.

In the meanwhile, all unknown to Francis, things were moving fast towards the realization of his own desires. The Provost of the Chapter of Geneva, François Empereur, had died on October 14, 1592, and Canon de Sales, in this connection, bethought him of a plan by which, perhaps, it might be more easy to obtain M. de Boisy's consent to allow Francis to enrol himself in the ranks of the clergy. This plan, which, cannot but seem most extraordinary to our ideas of the present day, was nothing other than to obtain from Rome for Francis the position of Provost of the Chapter. Canon de Sales first communicated his idea to the Bishop of the diocese, who, in his admiration for M. de Villaroget, gave it his hearty approval. The matter was then put into the hands of a confrère of Canon de Sales, by name François de Ronis, who, it appears, had considerable influence at the Roman court, and who was well versed in negotiations of the kind. In this particular case, at any rate, his energy and skill met with success, the appointment was made according to his petition, and the bulls, dated March 7, 1593, were despatched from Rome to Annecy, where they arrived on May 11. With these documents in their possession Canon de Sales and M. de Ronis made their way to La Thuille, and, showing Francis the bulls of his new office, said to him: "Here, at last, is the means of obtaining the thing you desire so much." Francis, from whom the whole affair had been kept a strict secret, was overwhelmed with surprise. He realized at once, however, the strength of the instrument that had been placed in his hands, and saw that the time for a definite decision had come. Supported by the Canon and M. de Ronis, he sought his father's presence without delay. "Father," he said to M. de Boisy, "I have come to ask you for a favour, such that, if you can see your way to granting it, I will never ask you for anything else." M. de Boisy, thinking that this might be some prerogative in connection with his marriage, objected that Francis might possibly ask him for something which would be to the detriment of his brothers and which, consequently, could hardly be granted. Francis assured him that this was not so. "Well," said M. de Boisy, "tell me what it is that you want." "That you would give me leave, father, to enter the Church," answered Francis. "And here are the apostolic bulls by which the Holy Father confers upon me the provostship of the church of St Peter of Geneva, the highest dignity in the diocese after that of the Bishop. My cousin here, and M. de Ronis, have obtained them for me without my knowing anything about it." For the moment M. de Boisy, utterly unprepared for such a situation, remained speechless with astonishment. Never for a moment had he dreamt that such a thing was in preparation. It was a blow that threatened to shatter utterly all those plans, so dear to his heart, for the worldly advancement of his son and the future prosperity of his family. It was impossible that he should agree to it without the strongest protest, and he proceeded to controvert the whole scheme with eloquence and point. "And who, my son, has put this whim into your head? Upon whose advice are you thus acting? I was hoping that you would be the support of my old age, and here you are, withdrawing yourself from me so soon! Take care what you are doing. You are surely in need of more mature and deliberate thought. You are made for greater things than this. You have spent so many years in studying law, and all this labour is to be wasted by your becoming a priest. You have brothers to whom you must stand as a father when I am gone; I am now well on in years and close to my end. Believe me, the choice of such a life demands more time than you are giving to it." "Father," answered Francis, "I will serve you to the last breath of my life, and I promise to give every possible assistance to my brothers. For the rest, there can be no question of my spending more time in thinking this matter over. From my earliest youth I have known that my bent was for the Church. I had that intention when the Bishop of Bagneray conferred on me the tonsure; at Paris I made a vow of chastity; at Padua I became more and more certain that this was my vocation; my visit to the holy House of Loretto enkindled still further in my heart a burning desire to persevere in it; and recently God has signified his will to me by the most extraordinary signs, in order that I should become more disposed to carry the cross and to follow our Lord." Francis then related to his father the strange events that had befallen him in the forest of Sonnaz. Then, flinging himself at the feet of M. de Boisy, with tears in his eyes he exclaimed: "I beg of you most humbly, I entreat you, to grant me this favour, beyond which I have nothing more to desire: and when you grant it to me, give me your blessing in the name of God at the beginning of my new career." M. de Boisy was visibly moved by the earnestness of his son's prayers, and by what he had just heard. The incident of the crossed sword made the deepest impression upon him: it seemed to him to be indeed the voice of God, and against the divine Will he had never dreamed of resisting. His faith in the strength of God's rights over every created soul was stronger than his father's love, stronger than any ambition of the world. If God was calling his son, he himself had no other option but to surrender. After a short hesitation he exclaimed: "Well, my son, since you assure me that it is God himself who has inspired you with this resolution, I believe you on your word. Do what the Lord demands of you. Who am I to resist him?" Then, stretching his hands over Francis's head, he added: "May God, by whose inspiration you are embracing this state, bless you again and again, and in his name I grant you your father's benediction." "Ah! thanks be to God!" cried Francis in his happiness. "He has granted me to-day what I have desired for so long, and there is nothing now that can hinder me from giving myself wholly up to him. And you also, my beloved father, may God's blessing be ever with you, who have just given me so signal a proof of your love. For the rest of my life I shall owe you the deepest gratitude of my heart." And, rising to his feet, Francis cast himself into his father's arms.*

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* C. A. de Sales, l. i, p. 54.

The two canons, after congratulating Francis, returned to Annecy in order to submit the apostolic bulls of his appointment to François de Chissé, vicar-general of the diocese. It does not seem quite certain whether Francis accompanied them: if he did, he must have returned to La Thuille the same day, for on May 13 he there took part in a little ceremony which ever afterwards marked for him the beginning of his clerical life. On this day he received at the hands of M. Bouvard, his friend and parish priest, the cassock which his mother had made for him and which had been secretly held in reserve for this occasion. The earnestness and devotion with which he accepted this uniform of his new calling was so great as to attract comment. One of his friends, possibly in a half-humorous vein, remarked to him that he had put on his cassock almost as if it had been the habit of a capuchin. To which Francis answered: "Ah, sir, I am putting on the habit of St Peter. It is only by dispensation that we are externally secularized: inwardly we are bound by the rule and chains of the Prince of the Apostles." As a further mark of his severance from the world, he renounced his rights as the eldest of the family, gave up the title of Seigneur de Villaroget, and assumed once more his former name of Francis de Sales.

Soon after this he departed for Annecy. There he received the warmest welcome from his friends, both clerical and lay, but especially from his bishop, Mgr. de Granier, who affectionately gave him the title of son, and ever afterwards treated him as such. On the eve of the Ascension (May 26), at a meeting of the chapter, Francis made the official presentation of the bulls conferring upon him the dignity of provost. The canons had already formally ascertained that by his birth and doctorate he fulfilled in a twofold manner the alternative conditions necessary for admission to their ranks.

It was not long after this that Mgr. de Granier ordered him to prepare for his ordination in the near future. Accordingly, on May 18, Francis retired to the château of Sales, accompanied by M. Bouvard, who was to help him in his retreat. As the family were then residing at La Thuille, the Provost and his director had this other house to themselves. In preparation for the subdiaconate, one of M. Bouvard's duties was to teach Francis how to recite the daily Office of the Church. To the surprise of the instructor, he found that his pupil had little or nothing to learn in this department. On being asked the reason of this, Francis answered: "It is because, during the whole of my stay at Padua, I was accustomed to go and recite the canonical hours with the Theatines on all feast days: and also because, during my travels, I used to like saying the Office with M. Déage. This I did for three reasons: firstly, in order to praise God; secondly, to help my tutor; and thirdly, in order to educate and occupy myself, for, after the Holy Scriptures, I know of no finer book than the Breviary."

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* C. A., l. i, p. 56 *et seq.*

In this matter, therefore, and in others M. Bouvard found his task an easy one, and the edification he experienced in watching the earnestness of the young Provost was of the greatest spiritual advantage to himself. It is related that on the last day of the retreat the director, going to the chapel, found Francis in tears. In answer to solicitous enquiries as to the cause of this emotion, the latter answered: "Alas! I was thinking of the infidelity of a certain religious, who, having abandoned his sacred calling, has caused the greatest scandal in the Church. For my part, now that I find myself on the good road of the ecclesiastical life, I wish never to leave it, but to advance along it without ever looking back, and to make continual progress in the life and science of the saints. I pray God to give me this grace."

At the conclusion of the retreat Francis received the four minor Orders at the hands of his Bishop. This was on June 8, 1593. Four days later, on the Ember Saturday before the feast of the Holy Trinity, he was ordained subdeacon in the church of St Francis at Annecy. After the ordination, in order to celebrate the occasion, Mgr. de Granier invited M. de Boisy and all his family to dinner. During the course of this meal Francis playfully remarked to the Bishop: "My lord, it would seem that I am a prodigal son, since you give a banquet of rejoicing to celebrate my entry into the sacerdotal family." The Bishop answered: "Up to the present you have had nothing from me. My predecessor, Ange Justiniani, confirmed you, Mgr. de Bagneray gave you the tonsure, but now you are my son and my subdeacon, upon whom God has lavished his graces. Soon you will be something still more to me. In the meanwhile I ask you to preach in the Cathedral next Thursday, the feast of the Blessed Sacrament." "But, my lord," said Francis in astonishment, "being only a subdeacon, I have not the right to preach, and as a novice in the ecclesiastical state I am incapable of doing it." "I insist on it," said the prelate. "As to the other, I have the power of dispensation." Francis, bowing to the Bishop, acquiesced to his command. "My lord," he answered, "since you command it, and since *obedience is better than sacrifice, in your word I will let down the net.* If, on the other hand, I do not give you such satisfaction as the occasion demands, your orders will be the cause of that default."

The Provost immediately began the preparation for his sermon, which, thanks to his theological knowledge and facility of composition, was not long in the making. In the meanwhile there had arrived in the town a celebrated Franciscan preacher, Father Jacques

Fodéré Bessan de Maurienne, whom the Bishop was very anxious to hear. It so happened, however, that this father could only stay in Annecy a short time and that the only day on which he could preach was the Thursday already fixed for the new Provost's sermon. Francis, as soon as he heard the difficulty, consented willingly to give up the pulpit to their distinguished visitor, and things were arranged accordingly. But even thus the matter was not ended. For Father Fodéré, having learnt that he was about to preach on the day that had been allotted to the Provost, came with the most earnest apologies to Francis, and refused to usurp his place. It was only by means of the greatest insistence on the part of the young cleric that the Franciscan was eventually persuaded to preach.

As a consequence of this incident, Francis's first sermon was deferred to the following week, the octave day of Corpus Christi. When the time came, he was very nearly rendered incapable of going to the pulpit by a sudden attack of nerves. Such an attack is not altogether uncommon in those who are making their first oratorical effort; yet it was the more extraordinary in the case of Francis de Sales, inasmuch as he had already had the experience of addressing several very critical audiences, notably at Padua and Chambéry. Be that as it may, when the Provost, waiting in his room, heard the sound of the bell announcing the commencement of the service at which he was to preach, he was seized with such nervousness and agitation that for a moment he was obliged to lie down upon his bed. As was usual with him when in trouble, he had immediate recourse to prayer: in a short time he felt his presence of mind return, the physical nervousness disappeared, and he was able to mount the pulpit in confidence and calm. Sermons in those days were very much more formidable than they are now: the zeal of the so-called reformers in the matter of preaching produced its effects among the Catholics, who were impelled to answer somewhat in kind. The pulpit discourses, therefore, became very theological, very controversial, and, above all, very long. But severe though the ordeal may have been, Francis came through it with the greatest credit. The audience marvelled both at the learning of the young subdeacon and at the eloquence with which that learning was imparted to them. The Bishop was especially moved, and at the end of the service, turning to the canons around him, exclaimed: "Well, you have heard my son. What do you think of him now? Did he not tell us wonderful things in a wonderful manner? Certain it is that we have a new apostle: he is powerful in word and in work, and has been given to us by God *to give knowledge of salvation to his people unto the remission of sins.*" And immediately he hastened to congratulate M. and Mme. de Boisy, whom he found surrounded by a crowd of admiring friends. The old father had been moved to tears by the eloquence of his son.

It is worthy of note that by this sermon were sowed the seeds of a remarkable conversion. Amongst the audience were several Calvinists of note, the foremost of whom was Antoine de Saint Michel, Baron d'Avully. This nobleman was a great student in matters religious and an ardent controversialist on behalf of the new religion. The Provost's sermon, however, moved him deeply, and henceforward he mitigated the hostility of his language against the Catholic faith.

After this first public initiation into his new life Francis entered upon a quieter phase of study, good works, and preparation for his ordination as deacon and priest. Whatever time he had to himself he spent with his books in the privacy of his room, storing in his mind the knowledge he would need for the future. He assisted with the greatest regularity at the recitation of the Office in the church of St Francis, and was remarked for his zeal and recollection in the performance of this duty. Though not yet ordained to the full powers of the priesthood, he devoted himself as much as he could to parochial work, such as visiting the sick, exhorting those who were backward in their religious duties, and acting as peacemaker amongst those who were divided by quarrels and enmities. It was his delight to talk about religious matters with his friends. An incident, illustrating this inclination of his, occurred during a great dinner given by his father to a number of the family friends, noblemen of the neighbourhood. During this meal Francis was discussing religious questions with those around him, and doing it with such charm and persuasiveness that they seemed to be forgetting the food before them. M. de Boisy, being a host who was anxious for the well-being of his guests, noticed this fact, and recalled the speaker to the business of the moment. "Provost," he said, "invite your neighbours to continue with their meal." The young man, in obedience to his father's wishes, immediately turned to his friends and said: "Gentlemen, my father bids us eat and drink." Afterwards he continued his interrupted discussion on spiritual matters with those friends who were only too anxious to hear him.

It was about this time that an interchange of letters between the Saint and Antoine Favre formed the beginning of a friendship that was to have the greatest influence upon Francis de Sales. Antoine Favre was one of the foremost men of his day in Savoy. At this time he was thirty-six years of age. After a brilliant course of studies at Paris and Turin he had been nominated advocate in the Senate of Chambéry, then senator: in after years he became First President of that assembly. He was distinguished not only for his learning, eloquence, and literary talent, but also for the saintliness of his life and his zeal for the faith: and on account of these things Francis had desired for a long time to make his acquaintance. It was probably of Antoine Favre that he wrote in a letter to a friend: "What more could I desire than to be known through your intermediary by him whose friendship, were he willing to extend it to me, I would value above all else."* Twice already his hopes of a personal meeting with the senator had been disappointed. In his first letter to M. Favre he writes: " When I went to Chambéry, in order to be admitted as an advocate, and when, after my admission, I thought to salute all the senators, to offer my thanks, and, by means of this opportunity, to seek a place and inscribe my name amongst your friends, I was forced by the fact that the nobility was called to arms at that stormy period to depart without saluting you. For, indeed, as I was hitherto unknown to you, I thought it better not to pay my respects at all than to do so in a hurried manner. Moreover, when this last Eastertide, in company with Dr. Coppier the physician, I called at your house, this also was in vain; for you were absent."†

Disappointed by these two failures, Francis for a time had taken no further steps in the matter. In this he was actuated by his own humility, for he did not consider himself to be of sufficient importance to warrant his forcing himself, as it were, into the notice of the eminent senator. His surprise and joy, therefore, were great when Antoine Favre, in a letter full of charm and affection, himself took the initiative and sought the younger man's friendship and correspondence. It was the beginning of an interchange of letters which spread over a wide stretch of time and which affords much valuable information to the biographers of the two friends. With regard to these early letters Dom Mackey makes the following very just remarks:

" We find in these letters the enthusiasm and, if we may venture to say so, the exaggeration of tone pardonable at that age, especially at the end of the sixteenth century, when literary taste was by no means at its best. His own language did not suffice the young saint, especially in his relations with Senator Favre. In an elaborated style of Latin the two friends exchanged expressions of an affection which time was to consecrate: play upon words abounds, and if these two great men were not known to us, we should be tempted to think that their chiefest aim was a display of wit. In writing these letters, the Provost would carefully prepare rough drafts, the interlinings and erasures of which betray both labour and the striving after good style. . . . This period of literary youthfulness lasted but a short time. The work of the apostolate had a maturing influence, especially an apostolate as laborious as that of Chablais. Soon the style of the Missionary becomes loftier, clearer, and more natural. There is no longer any time to think of flowers of rhetoric: the saint thinks only of God and of souls, and, freeing himself from all artificial influence, becomes dignified and simple, because he has at last become himself."*

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* E.N., Tom. XI, Lettre VI, p. 11.

† E.N., Tom. XI, Lettre IX, p. 23.

Although Francis had now irrevocably embraced the ecclesiastical state, that fact did not altogether stop M. de Boisy from desiring that his son should take a prominent position amongst the men of his day. Consequently he was at this time continually urging upon the Provost the expediency of taking upon himself the dignity of Senator. It would seem that, not long after Francis's admission as an advocate, the Duke of Savoy, having been told of the young man's talent and general excellence, had decided to raise him to senatorial rank. This news was brought from Turin by François Melchior de Saint-Joire, Baron d'Hermance, who was a great friend of the family. According to Charles-Auguste, he even brought with him the letters patent of the appointment. At whatever date this was, Francis refused the offer. Nicolas Decroux, the notary, who had been in the employ of the family of the De Sales for six years, gave the following evidence of this in his deposition in 1623. "He refused the dignity of senator, although he had the letters patent from the Duke of Savoy; and I know this because I myself gave him these letters after receiving them from Baron d'Hermance, who had brought them from Turin."

If this refusal took place before Francis donned the cassock, as several of his biographers seem to infer, it is equally certain from other evidence that the matter was not allowed to rest there. M. de Boisy, aided by several of his friends, returned to the charge, even after his son had been appointed provost. He pointed out to the young cleric that François Empereur, his predecessor in the Chapter, had enjoyed the senatorial dignity, that it was not an uncommon thing for clerics to hold the rank, and that to be a senator was not incompatible with being a good ecclesiastic. The Provost, however, had other views. To all such arguments he replied with the words of the Apostle: "*No man being a soldier to God entangleth himself with secular business.* I do not want to divide myself between God and the world. I want to be an ecclesiastic and nothing else." At another time Francis said to his father: "I feel that God inspires me to give myself wholly and entirely to his service: he is my sole Master, and he will brook no rival." M. de Boisy, not altogether able to contain his disappointment, could only ejaculate: "Well, go your way, then. I see well enough that I should only lose time in trying to dissuade you. Serve God alone."

Even in the late autumn of 1593 persuasion was still being brought to bear upon the Saint on this question of the senatorship. Antoine Favre urges him most earnestly in his letters to accept the dignity; but, much as Francis admired this eminent man, and greatly as he desired to strengthen the bonds of their friendship, the answer was the same as he had already given to his father. It is unfortunate that the letter, in which he gave his reasons for refusing the dignity, has been lost, though there is evidence that it was seen by more than the recipient.

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* E.N., Avant-propos, Tom. XI, p. xxvii.

While Francis worked among the people of his parish, and as he became better acquainted with the state of religion in Annecy, and in the rest of the diocese of Geneva, he became more and more convinced that some organized effort of revival was needed among the Catholics of Savoy. The country was undergoing evils both spiritual and temporal. Heresy was spreading throughout the diocese under the influence and propaganda of the Genevans: even where Catholics had not been absolutely converted to the new religion, they were rendered lax and indifferent by its influence. The country was continually in a state of war, a soldiery hostile to catholicity threatened the lives and property of the inhabitants, while famine and pestilence worked terrible havoc amongst the harassed people. Francis saw that, in order to strengthen the weak and to comfort the disheartened, some kind of solidarity must be organized amongst the Catholics: and he bethought him of the plan of forming one of those confraternities, or religious associations, which have always been used by the Church in times of stress, and which have proved of incalculable good to the faithful. He meditated his plan for a long time, and made it the continual subject of his prayers. Then in due course, after consulting his colleagues, he proceeded to draw up a definite scheme. Eventually the statutes of the Confraternity were laid before the Chapter, being read to the assembled canons by the Provost himself. The work was placed under the patronage of the Cross of Christ, of the Immaculate Virgin Mary, and of the Apostles SS Peter and Paul; under the Cross of Christ, as the standard of the Church; under the Immaculate Virgin Mary, as the Help of all Christians and the suppressor of heresy; and under SS Peter and Paul, as the patrons of the diocese of Geneva. It was while speaking of these saints that the Provost voiced the feelings of the Catholics of those days towards the Calvinists of Geneva. He described how the holy Apostles had preserved the Church of Geneva, its town, its diocese, and its people in the profession of the orthodox faith, without the slightest taint of heresy, almost from the cradle of the Church up to the year 1535. "For it was then alone that Satan, the author of all evil, infected the town and a part of the diocese with the contagion of various errors, and caused therein the most violent troubles that heresy could bring with it. In truth, the heretics drove away the Bishop who governed that Church, along with his canons, all the clergy and all others who kept the true faith: they destroyed the churches, pulled down the altars, broke the statues, pillaged the sacred vestments and vessels, scattered and trod under foot the relics of the saints, and, in fine, profaned all sacred things: in such a way that the unhappy city has since done naught else but foment wars, encourage murder, and devise treasons. She has become the sink and sewer of arson and rapine, and the shelter of the most perverted and most criminal men of Europe. One can, in consequence, justly say that she is the origin of all the evils that up to the present have afflicted France and Savoy.

"There is reason to hope that, if, by invoking the saving sign of the Cross and by imploring the prayers of the ever-glorious Virgin and of the Holy Apostles, we turn to the God of mercy with true compunction of heart, with prayers, fasting, frequent confession of our sins, Communion and other truly Christian works, the great God, who, although very merciful and gentle, wills nevertheless to be prayed, constrained and almost conquered by a kind of importunity and by continual intercession, will deliver and protect us from all vexation on the part of the heretics, from the incursions, pillages, and insults of the soldiery, from the famine which threatens us, from the plagues which afflict us, from the wars which overwhelm us, and from all the dangers which menace us and are at our very gates.

"We must even hope, moreover, that, after having destroyed in the wretched town of Geneva the enemies of his divine majesty and of the human race, he will cause the holy Catholic religion to flourish there once more, and that he will re-establish us in our ancient homes and in the bosom of our own church. From that church we have been driven now more than fifty years, during which time we have lived in this town of Annecy, like strangers and travellers in a church that charity has lent us."*

The church chosen as the headquarters of the confraternity was that of St John the Baptist, belonging to the Order of St John of Jerusalem: it was apparently a building little in use at the time, partly owing to the want of priests and partly because the structure had suffered somewhat from the unchecked ravages of time. By making it the centre of the Confraternity, the Saint hoped to bring it once more into use.

The special feasts of the brotherhood were to be the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, the Immaculate Conception of Our Lady, the Finding of the Cross, and the Feast of SS Peter and Paul. On these days there was to be solemn exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. The second Sunday of the month (afterwards changed to the third) was also to be a day of exposition, except during the months of May, June, September, and December, when the number of great feasts to be observed made this inconvenient. The brothers, dressed in their Confraternity uniform, would take it in turns to watch before the Blessed Sacrament, each couple of watchers to remain there for one hour. The special feasts of the Confraternity and the evening of

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* C. A., l. i, p. 65.

Holy Thursday were also to be signalized by processions, at which all the members, of both sexes, were obliged to attend.

All the members were bound to communicate once a month, on the Sunday appointed, and on the four special feasts; and this Communion was to be made, if possible, in the Confraternity church. Members who were priests were required to say Mass in St John's on these days, or at least on some other day, perhaps more convenient.

Mass was to be said every Sunday in the Oratory by some priest of the Confraternity appointed by the Prior, and all the members were obliged to assist, if possible. They were urged to unite their intentions on these occasions with the celebrant and to aid him by their prayers.

Each day all the members were bound to say five *Our Fathers* and five *Hail Marys:* and, moreover, they also engaged themselves to recite the Angelus on their knees and with bared head wherever they might be when the bell rang, even if they were in the streets or public places. The special intention for this was that the whole province of Savoy might be protected by the intercession of our Lady "from sicknesses, plagues, storms, hail, and other corruptions and troubles of the air."*

If any of the members saw the Blessed Sacrament being carried to the sick, they should, if possible, accompany it, praying at the same time for the health of the sick person. They ought also to visit the sick and the imprisoned, whenever they happened to hear of such.

Should any member hear of a lawsuit or dissension amongst others of the Confraternity, he ought to inform the Prior, so that the latter, together with his assessors, might strive to bring the dissidents into agreement. Meanwhile the rest of the brotherhood should offer up special prayers to God for the cessation of the dispute.

As soon as news was brought of the death of any member, a cross draped in black cloth was to be placed on the door of the Oratory, and also a card giving the hour of the funeral and the name of the church from which the body was to be taken for burial, so that the other members might assemble there in order to accompany the body, and pray for the repose of the soul of the dead person: to which duty all would be obliged unless hindered by some important matter. Next day a Requiem Mass would be celebrated for the salvation of that soul, and for its release from the pains of purgatory.

In addition to that, in order that there might be an annual commemoration of those of the Confraternity who were dead, there was to be a general Requiem in the Oratory on the first free day after the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross. This Mass was to be said by the Prior, and all the members were to assist in their uniform.

* C. A., l. i, p. 70.

The habit of the Confraternity was to be a simple tunic of coarse, black material, covering the body from the neck to the feet, without embroidery or decoration of any sort, with a hood, of the same material and colour, covering the head and face. The habit was to be girded at the waist by a knotted cord, such as is worn by the Franciscans, from which cord should hang a simple rosary. This habit was to be given with a particular ceremony by the Prior to whomsoever entered the company, and all the members, of whatever condition or rank they might be, were bound to wear it in the Oratory, in the processions, and at the public functions of the Confraternity. The habit of the women was to be of white material with the same cord and rosary.

Other regulations there were, dealing with the election and duties of the various officers of the Confraternity—the Prior, his two assessors, the treasurer, the secretary, and the twelve counsellors.

When everything was organized and settled, the Provost submitted his proposals to the Bishop, who gave them his warmest sanction. They were then submitted to the Chapter for their approval, which was granted with equal willingness, and the Confraternity was definitely established on September 1, 1593. At the first reunion Francis was appointed Prior, and one of the first members whom he received by virtue of his new office was his own father, M. de Boisy. The opening celebration of the brotherhood took place on September 14, the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, and everything concurred happily to mark with distinction the beginning of the new venture—beautiful music, costly decorations, a church crowded with devout worshippers, and the presence of the Bishop, who officiated at Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. It was not very long before the Confraternity produced such excellent results that it was speedily extended to the nearest parishes, and from them to other parts of the diocese. The Duke of Savoy was so pleased with the institution that he granted it the privilege of releasing each year, on Holy Thursday, a criminal condemned to death or to the galleys: and the archives of the Senate of Savoy contain official acts of such deliverances granted in the years 1604, 1606, and 1622.

Four days after the Feast of the Exaltation mentioned above Francis received the diaconate. This further step in the direction of the priesthood was marked by an extension of his labours. In addition to the work of fostering his newly-made Confraternity, he added that of an apostleship among the villages in the neighbourhood of Annecy. Passing from one to the other, he would catechize the children and instruct the poor country-folk, whose ignorance about their religion caused him the deepest sorrow. The villagers, seeing his gentleness, charity, and zeal, listened to him with attention, and before long he had the consolation of remarking a distinct change in the religious life of these new charges. Meanwhile, the Bishop, noticing his success in this work, decided that there was good reason for raising Francis as soon as possible to the priesthood, so that the wide powers of that office might make his zeal capable of doing all the good that was possible. Accordingly Mgr. de Granier told the Provost to prepare himself for ordination in the ember week of Advent. We learn from one of his letters to Senator Favre that, deacon though he was, he was called upon to preach on special occasions. Thus, when the Bishop ordered throughout the diocese a novena of prayer for the release of the Duke of Nemours and Genevois, who was at that time held as a prisoner by the people of Lyons at the château of Pierre-Cise, Francis was appointed to preach the sermon urging the people to take part in the public prayers. For a time also there was considerable anxiety about the health of his mother, who was about to give birth to her thirteenth child, and twice he was called to her bedside. This occasion is one of the many showing the strength of love between these two, for in his letter to Senator Favre Francis mentions that his presence always gave her the greatest consolation.* This letter, by the way, is an important one for the chronology of the Saint's life, for in it he says that at that date, about the beginning of December, 1593, his mother was then in her forty-second year. The child born on this occasion was Jeanne, the last of Mme. de Boisy's children, who afterwards died at the age of fourteen, when under the care of St Jane Frances de Chantal.

In what spirit the Provost regarded the advent of his priesthood may be gathered from another of his letters to Antoine Favre. He tells the Senator that at the approach of the terrible day of his ordination when, in obedience to the will of God, as voiced by the will of his Bishop, he was about to be promoted to the dignity of the priesthood, he could not dispense himself from the duty of informing his friend of the greatness of the honour that was coming to him.

He describes how, when about to undergo the most glorious change that could come upon man, he was seized with the greatest anxiety that had ever afflicted him, and he quotes the words of the psalm: *Fear and trembling are come upon me.* It was the custom of friends to confide to one another their cares and anxieties on undertaking some arduous and perilous work for the sake of consolation. "And, indeed," he says, "nothing so arduous and perilous can ever happen to mortal man as to hold in his hands and, in the words of St Jerome, to produce by his word That which the angels themselves cannot embrace in their thought or worthily celebrate—or, those blessed intelligences whom we in our turn can neither conceive nor fittingly praise.

'And indeed I was not ignorant that this most sacred dignity is accompanied with great peril. But distance badly deceives the eyes that gaze far ahead; and one's appreciation of a thing that is near is very different from that of one which is distant. You are the only person who seems to me capable of gauging the trouble of my mind. For you follow after things divine with such care and reverence, that you can easily understand how dangerous and terrible it is to have charge of that celebration, how easy it is in such matters to sin gravely, how difficult to exercise them with the worthiness they deserve. . . .

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* E.N., Tom. XI, Lettre XII, p. 33.

" However, I do not wish you to think these holy mysteries affect me with such fear that I find no room for a hope and a gladness far beyond what my own merits could gain for me. I joy and rejoice especially that henceforward I can at least make some return by that office which is the sublimest of all, I mean by sacrifice—and by that Sacrifice indeed which is the supreme holocaust."*

It was with such sentiments that Francis was ordained on the Saturday of Ember week, December 18, and all who were present remarked that during the whole ceremony he was filled with the deepest recollection of the dignity he was receiving. Mgr. de Granier's emotion, as he performed the solemn acts of consecration over the new priest, was so intense that it overcame all his efforts to conceal it.

* E.N., Tom. XI, Lettre XIII.

CHAPTER VI*

(1593-1594)

Francis says his first Mass—Installation as Provost of Cathedral Chapter—Priestly labours—Quality of his preaching—M. de Boisy's criticism—Work as director of souls—He is appointed Canon Penitentiary—Presides over a theological discussion—Relations with the Bishop—Letters to Antoine Favre—Pilgrimage of the Confraternity of the Cross to Aix.

FRANCIS did not say his first Mass on the morrow of his ordination, but, according to a custom not infrequent in those days, preferred to prepare himself for this great event by a three days' retreat. During this time of preparation he made three special resolutions. The first was to perform all his actions in the same spirit in which he stood at the altar, and to make every moment of the day a continual preparation for the Sacrifice of the morrow, in such a way that, if anyone were to ask him the reason of his conduct, he could truthfully answer: "I am preparing to celebrate Mass." The second was never to go up to the altar except in those dispositions in which he would wish to be at the hour of death and at the moment of appearing before God. The third was to unite himself in all things with Jesus Christ, the Sovereign Priest, by a recollection full of love and by the imitation of his virtues; "for," he used to say, "since the priest unites himself bodily with Jesus in the sacrament of the altar, it needs must be that he should make but one with him: and in order that God should delight to be one with us, we must, indeed, make ourselves in all things like to God; in order to live and dwell with him, we must make ourselves like unto him. My God," he would add, "when I think of these truths, it seems to me that my heart will break, and that it says to me: 'Ah, blessed be Jesus! for I only wish to live, and indeed can only live for Jesus.' Ah, my Jesus, who are we? When shall we be like thy holy Mother, who, bearing thee within her womb, lived as all those ought to live who receive thee in the august sacrament of the Eucharist?"

It was in such dispositions that Francis celebrated his first Mass in the cathedral of Annecy on Tuesday, December 21, 1593, the feast of St Thomas the Apostle. The Bishop of Geneva, M. and Mme. de Boisy, Antoine Favre and many other friends were present, as well as a large crowd of every rank and condition. A number of the faithful, including the Provost's father and mother and Antoine Favre, received Holy Communion from his hands on this occasion. Once more his intense earnestness and recollection, his forgetfulness of all around him except the great act he was performing, filled the spectators with admiration and reverence. It is related by Mother de Chaugy that several people were so struck by his example that day that henceforward they began to give themselves more especially to a life of prayer and virtue. Francis himself afterwards told St Jane Frances that in this first Sacrifice God took possession of his soul in an inexplicable manner, and inspired him then with sentiments and intentions which influenced him for the rest of his life, so that he ever afterwards said his daily Mass in the same dispositions in which he had celebrated his first.*

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* Hamon, l. ii, chap. i.

In the afternoon of the same day he officiated at Vespers, and having been invited to preach, spoke to his audience of the great mysteries which naturally at that moment filled his mind—the sublimity of the priesthood and the excellence of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

The next step after Francis's ordination was his official installation as Provost of the Chapter. He was installed by the eldest of the Canons, Jean Tissot, under whose guidance he went through the various ceremonies prescribed by custom. The Bishop, M. and Mme. de Boisy, and many friends of his were present. The church was thronged with the people of the city, and the presence of choir and instrumentalists gave a further accent to the solemnity of the occasion. At the end of the function the new Provost, rising from his stall, made an address in Latin to the Canons. After adapting to his own case the words of the prayer used at the beginning of a chapter meeting, he went on to describe how the thought of that prayer and the sight of his friends, especially of the Bishop and the Canons, gave him confidence in the midst of the anxiety which he naturally felt on such an occasion. Before outlining the work which he proposed to set before himself in his new office, he felt it incumbent on him to describe that anxiety and the deep sense of his own unworthiness which filled his soul on occupying the first seat of the chapter.

"During the recent feasts of Christmastide," he said, "when the very sublimity of these days made me enter into myself, and while I was thinking of what remained to me of this mortal existence, the most serious and imminent of the many difficulties which seemed to rise before me in my voyage across the sea of life was this—that I had been appointed by the will of the Sovereign Pontiff to be Provost of the Chapter of the Cathedral Church of St Peter of Geneva.

"It seemed to me inopportune and altogether dangerous that I, unformed, inexperienced, a soldier of the ranks, should at the very threshold of the ecclesiastical novitiate be appointed Provost, a leader before I had been led, a teacher before I had been taught.* For there arose to my mind the words of David: *It is vain for you to rise before light: rise you after you have sitten:* which, though literally it refers to another matter, yet according to *the spirit that quickeneth* may easily be made to allude to those who seek to preside over others before they themselves have sat down in the place of the learner, and who, like fruits that mature too soon, cannot exist for very long without deterioration.

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* Pérennès, l. i, chap. xiv, p. 111.

"And then I saw appear before me, as in a vision, your venerable Chapter. At its head there sat enthroned that Apostle who holds the keys of heaven, and he seemed to address me in grave reproach. 'What spirit moves you, poor Francis, that you, who in learning, mind and manner of life are inferior to all, should thus think to be placed over the very first? Do you not know that honours are replete with responsibilities? Have you no fear of that summons, the time of which is uncertain, it is true, but assuredly not far off—*Give an account of thy stewardship*'? At these words so deeply was my soul moved within me that, even were it profitable to recall that emotion, I could find no sufficient terms to describe it. Only could I repeat within myself—*O Lord, I have heard thy hearing and was afraid.*

"And yet, Reverend Fathers, now that this day has shone upon me, I find it one in which the kind and generous presence of your assembly, strengthening and refreshing me, takes from me much of my terror, and greatly increases in me a due confidence in God: so that, comparing the terror which I formerly felt with the joy I now experience, it is difficult for me to determine which of the two affects me the more.

"For there might have been cause for fear on the part of a Provost placed over those who could with difficulty be kept to their duty. But what cause for fear can there be for me on this occasion, when I see before me only those whose charity and wisdom are such that each one of you is himself worthy to be Provost? Why should I linger in thought over my inexperience and insignificance, when in the exercise of my office I shall need neither to enforce discipline nor to give any sort of correction? . . ."

The speaker then went on to admit that, seeing what distinguished men had hitherto filled the provostship, his own election must, indeed, seem to them a grievous decline in the dignity of that office. But he reminded them, on the other hand, that God had often chosen *the foolish things of the world to confound the strong* and *out of the*

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* It is impossible to give in English the full force of the Provost's Latin: *Prius praepositus quam positus, praefectus quam factus.*

mouths of infants and of sucklings had perfected praise. In that thought and in the hope of God's assistance he placed all his confidence for the future.

But was it right thus to throw the responsibility of his own actions upon Almighty God, and then to expect the assistance of the divine grace? His answer to this was a brief but striking account of the history of his appointment and the dilemma in which he found himself.

"I had spoken," he said, "of my intention of embracing the clerical life to several persons whose authority has always been for me of the highest. Unknown to me—I speak frankly and truly, Fathers, nor is it possible that I should speak falsely in their very presence—they urged friends of theirs by letter that, if it were possible, the latter should obtain for me this your provostship, which at that time had fallen vacant. Their letters anticipated all similar petitions on behalf of others: what they asked for was granted, and the favour demanded was conveyed to me.

"What, Reverend Fathers, would you have wished me to do under such circumstances? To reject the favour absolutely seemed to me to hold in it a certain element of ingratitude, boorishness and contempt towards those who had obtained this favour on my behalf. To accept it was full of danger and anxiety. Placed in this dilemma, I resolved to wait until to-day, and if, on this desired and revealing occasion, you were to reject me as unworthy, I would willingly depart, feeling myself adjudged unfit by a sentence which for me would have the force of a decree of justice. But if you should consider me as being not unworthy, then willingly would I submit my shoulders to the burden, convinced that your judgement could be followed with all security.

"Wherefore, since—as I now see—you receive me with such full and unanimous congratulations, if there is any fault on my part for accepting this honour, bethink you that the conscience of every one of you is equally bound with mine in such a way that those who have acted in the matter and those who have consented thereto are liable to the same responsibility. Now, if you wish to fulfil that responsibility and free yourselves from it, there will remain this one thing for you to do—that you help and sustain my feebleness with your counsels and example, and that out of your charity you would supply and compensate for what is wanting in me. How great that deficit is I myself know only too well. . . . I wish you to believe that I will accept the counsels of each one of you with all reverence in the Lord in such a way that, if all you together have but one Provost, I, on my part, shall have as many Provosts as there are Canons. I desire to be looked upon not so much as a Provost placed over the Canons but as one who is their property, and who belongs to them heart and soul." The Provost then went on to the second part of his discourse, in which he elaborates his plans for the subjugation of Geneva. We have not sufficient space to give this in full, but must content ourselves with the briefest summary. When he spoke of the subjugation of Geneva, he did not think of means such as are employed by the armies of the world, but he spoke rather of spiritual weapons, of prayer, fasting and exemplary lives. He pointed out that their opponents drew great strength from the actions and words of Catholics who were not living up to the standard of their religion, and this was particularly true when the scandal came, as it often did, from the clergy. The walls of Geneva, then, were to be carried by ardent prayer, fraternal charity, and virtuous living. He drew his discourse to a close by referring all to the glory of God and to the honour of our Lady and the saints, and finally ended it by a renewal of thanks on his own behalf to his friends, to the Canons and to the Bishop, whose blessing he besought for all those present.*

From now onward Francis de Sales gave himself up to the various duties of the priesthood with the greatest ardour. We find him preaching again on January 1, and it was not long before those entrusted with the care of souls realized that God had placed a great power within their reach in the person of the young Provost. Invitations to preach became numerous, and Francis, full of zeal for God's word, lent himself willingly to the work, finding it difficult to refuse. One of these sermons, preached on Septuagesima Sunday (February 6) at Seyssel on the Rhone, caused considerable stir. On this occasion, we are told, he reached a height of eloquence which far outstripped his first utterances. He was inspired at once by the keen interest of his audience, which was composed partly of Catholics in daily contact with the enemies of the Faith and partly of Protestants curious to hear him. Roused by the danger of the former, who were constantly exposed to hearing the new doctrines, and no less moved by the unhappy state of those whom error had already seduced, he preached with a depth of feeling, an apostolic power and an energy of language which strongly confirmed the Catholics in their faith and effectually shook the convictions of the Calvinists. Such, indeed, was his power that the report of this sermon spread throughout the neighbouring country into Geneva itself, and henceforth the leaders of the new religion in that city marked down the Saint as one whose eloquence and learning were a menace to their security. Mgr. de Granier, the exiled Bishop of Geneva, hearing of this success and of others like it, was filled with the utmost joy and thankfulness. "God has chosen to refuse me the gift of eloquence for myself," he humbly exclaimed, "but he has given me a son who will be for me my word and my voice."

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* See volume of *Opuscules* in the *Œuvres Completes,* published by Blaise in 1821 at Paris.

It was noticeable from the first that in his preaching Francis de Sales was determined to avoid the style of the day. It was then the fashion amongst pulpit orators to embellish their sermons with Greek and Latin quotations, with passages from the pagan classics, with allusions to ancient mythology. Ecclesiastics had formerly been taunted by the apostles of the Renaissance with their ignorance of the ancient classics and their want of good literary and elocutionary style. This necessarily reacted upon clerical education, and, both as a removal of the reproach and as a manifest necessity of the times, greater attention had been paid to ancient literature, eloquence was modelled, often very badly, upon that of the orators of old, and a certain display of classical erudition became the vogue. But the thing had gone too far. For a cultivated audience this style of preaching might be beneficial or, at least, excusable: for a mixed congregation, such as the ordinary churches generally enclosed, it was a useless and unpardonable pedantry. Greek was Greek indeed to the poor and ignorant, while mythological allusions, wherever they might be understood, were not necessarily edifying to those who claimed to be disciples of Christ. All this was very clearly seen by Francis de Sales; and as he was preaching not for his own reputation as a scholarly orator, but for the salvation of souls, he chose to adapt his language to the people to whom he spoke. The consequence was that for all classes of the faithful his sermons had the greatest attraction. His gift of clear thought and his habit of thoroughly digesting his reading gave him the power of imparting his learning with such lucidity that it was understood even by the ignorant; his appreciation of what was human gave him sympathy; his natural eloquence and grace were a charm to the more cultivated; whilst the impulse of divine charity, his love of God and of God's creatures, gave him the real driving power, the genuinely effective force for conversion, without which his other gifts might have tended to mere display.

We learn from Francis himself, however, that he was not without finding at least one critic. M. de Boisy, who was nothing if not conservative, could neither approve of the frequency of his son's sermons nor of their direct simplicity. He rejoiced, indeed, in the Provost's success, but he felt it incumbent upon himself to voice the criticisms that rose up in his mind. The incident is related by Mgr. Camus, the Bishop of Belley, who affects to quote St Francis's own words: it is only fair to remark that there are some who think that this worthy Bishop was inclined to report his hero's words with a strong seasoning of his own mentality and imagination. Anyhow, according to Mgr. Camus, the Saint's account of this affair is as follows:

"I had, indeed, the best father in the world, but he was one who had passed the greatest part of his life at the court or in the field, of the maxims of which he had a store greater than his knowledge of theology. When I was Provost, I used to preach at every opportunity—in the cathedral, in the various parishes, and even in the smallest confraternities. I did not know what it was to refuse, so dear to me was that word of our Lord: *Give to everyone that asketh thee.* My good father, hearing the bell ringing for a sermon, would ask who was preaching; and people would answer: 'Who should it be but your son?' One day he took me aside and said to me: 'Provost, you are preaching too often. Even on work days I hear the bell ringing for a sermon, and every time people say to me—*It's the Provost, the Provost.* In my time it was not thus. Sermons were much rarer, but, on the other hand, what sermons they were! They were learned, well thought out, and full of wonderful things. There was more Latin and Greek quoted in one of those sermons than there is in ten of yours. Everyone was delighted and edified, and people gathered for them in great crowds. . . . Nowadays you are making this exercise so common that people no longer think anything of it, and, what is more, have no longer the same appreciation of yourself.'

"Look you," continued the man of God, "this good father was speaking according to his lights and in all frankness. He was speaking, according to the maxims of the world in which he had been reared. But the maxims of the Gospel are of quite another stamp. Jesus Christ, the mirror of perfection and the model of preachers, did not use all this pomp and circumstance: neither did the Apostles who followed in his steps. Believe me, we shall never preach enough. We can never sufficiently repeat what is never sufficiently learnt—especially nowadays and in the neighbourhood of heresy, which only maintains itself by sermons and will only be vanquished by the same means."*

Consequently, in spite of his father's observations, Francis continued to preach as frequently as before.

It was not long before there was revealed in the Provost another of the gifts for which he afterwards became famous, to wit, his power as a director of souls. He was indefatigable in the work of the confessional. Moved by the eloquence of his sermons, drawn by the attraction of his sympathetic personality, large numbers of the faithful sought his help in the tribunal of Penance. He was ever at the beck and call of all those who needed him, attending to all comers, without distinction of person or rank. If anything, he showed a preference for the poor and afflicted. Many touching stories are related of him in this connection—how he would rise from his seat to assist the blind or the lame when he saw them making their slow

* *Esprit*, Part III, Section 9.

way to his confessional; how, when his words of loving exhortation moved his poorer penitents to tears, he would lend them his own handkerchief, if need there were, however lowly or even revolting the object of his compassion might be, and how he even went so far as always to have with him little packets of money, to give as alms to those of his penitents whom he found to be in dire need. That this last trait of his would be a dangerous precedent for the ordinary confessor to follow can scarcely be denied: but the saints have ever in such matters been beyond the ordinary rules, and their charity defies the more usual dictates of prudence.

Seeing the young priest's success and zeal in his administration of the Sacrament of Penance, the Chapter determined to propose him to the Bishop as Canon Penitentiary. Francis was accordingly appointed to this office by Mgr. de Granier, who had been delegated for the purpose by Cardinal Mattei. The Provost attacked the duties of his new charge with characteristic zest, and, in order to place himself more fully at the convenience of his subjects, had a confessional erected at his own expense close to the main entrance of the cathedral. When asked why he chose this site in preference to one more honourable and more convenient for himself, he smilingly turned aside the curiosity of his questioner and concealed his real motives with one of his metaphorical answers. "My reason is simple," he said. "It is that the priest ought to be near the door, in order to call the sheep and open to them the fold: and because, moreover, it is written that death enters by the windows and the good shepherd by the door."

We have already related how M. de Boisy thought fit to criticize his son in the matter of his sermons. That this implied no lack of appreciation of that son's wisdom in things spiritual is proved by the fact that he chose Francis as his own confessor and director. Every fortnight he would place himself at his son's confessional, and even when he was residing at the château of Sales, would go all the way to Annecy to make his confession to the Provost. The father's example was soon followed by the whole family, and all the members of the household, from Mme. de Boisy to the humblest of her servants, placed themselves under Francis's guidance. A more striking testimony to the genuineness of his sanctity and to the esteem in which those who knew him best had reason to hold him, can scarcely be imagined. The result of this confidence was soon evident; under the influence of the Provost's wise counsels and earnest exhortations the household of the château of Sales became a model of the Christian family life.

With his brother Louis the Saint still preserved a special intimacy of affection. The young nobleman had no greater joy than to be in the Provost's company, and would follow him, whenever possible, even into the reunions and conferences of the clergy, sacrificing for this the amusements and society of the young noblemen of his own age. Though he had abandoned all idea of becoming a priest, he still retained a strong inclination for the sacred sciences, and for his instruction in these he greatly relied on his brother. "I beg you," he would say to Francis, "allow me to be constantly with you, like a disciple with his master, so that I can learn from your lips those secrets of the Christian life and those excellent teachings of philosophy and theology which you may consider useful for me." Like his father, he became a member of the Confraternity of the Holy Cross, and, not content with this, he made himself an apostle of the brotherhood, zealous to attract others into its ranks. It is also evident that he possessed some of his brother's literary talent, for he composed a hymn of praise in honour of the Cross which was judged worthy of publication.

Although a great deal of the Provost's time was taken up by his choir duties and his work in the pulpit and confessional, he nevertheless took care to devote a certain part of his day to the study of theology. He understood well that the priest, as guardian and teacher of the divine law, should be by his very profession a man of learning. He saw how necessary it was that, in addition to his preliminary studies in preparation for the priesthood, he ought also to read continually during the exercise of his ministry, so that he might not lose the knowledge already gained, and might also increase his power by the study of new matter and the acquirement of fresh learning. For this purpose he reserved each day a certain amount of time to be devoted to the study of divinity, and in this study usually made use of the *Summa* of St Thomas as his textbook. How well he succeeded in acquiring the doctrine of the great theologian was made evident to all by an incident that occurred during these first years of his provostship.

Two young divinity students, Etienne Dunant and Claude Chevalier, who had recently arrived from the University of Louvain, were anxious to give proof in their native town of Annecy that the time which they had spent abroad had not been wasted, and for this purpose proposed to sustain a public thesis on any part of the *Summa*. But for this was needed a president who himself must possess a thorough knowledge of St Thomas, in order to guide the discussion along the right channels and, if need be, make clear such points as were likely to be obscured in the heat of the argument. For this purpose Dunant and Chevalier were advised to apply to the Provost, and, acting upon the counsel thus given, they asked him to accept the presidency. Francis, however, strove to decline the honour. He pointed out that he was not a doctor of theology and that the presidency on such an occasion belonged by right to the cathedral or collegiate Canons who bore that title. The two young men answered that, having already consulted the Canons, they were sure of the consent of these dignitaries, and were also certain that the refusal of the Provost would disappoint everybody in the town who had an interest in the matter. Francis accordingly put aside his objections, and accepted the invitation. The "defensions" took place in the great hall of the college: all the theologians of the town and of the neighbourhood attended, as well as a numerous gathering of people interested in such displays. The two students, vigorously attacked by the various doctors, answered with talent and knowledge, fully satisfying the expectations of their friends. For a long time the struggle continued, the clever objections of the attackers being met with a solidly efficient defence, and the whole discussion engaging the keenest attention on the part of the audience. But, interesting as was the display of the protagonists, it had to be confessed that the presiding skill and learning of the Provost aroused the greatest admiration of all. Often in the heat of such an argumentation both objectors and defenders find themselves involved in obscurities or lost in side-issues that threaten to spoil the discussion and leave the combatants in mutual embarrassment. The Provost, however, proved himself equal to any such occasions. With a tactful exercise of his prerogative he would intervene in the debate, and would recall the disputants to the main points at issue, enlightening the temporary obscurities, solving quickly and effectively the various difficulties, and displaying the truth with the clearness of perception and exposition which was peculiarly his own. "Those who had no idea that he possessed such deep learning," says Father de la Rivière, "were amazed at seeing the solidity of his judgement, and the quickness of his mind in answering without hesitation, in enlightening truths, in solving difficulties, in deducing distinctions, and in untying the most knotty arguments. . . ." The result of this incident was to give Francis a still higher place in the esteem of those who, being learned themselves, were competent to pass a sound judgment upon the learning of others.

As the Bishop of Geneva, noticing the Provost's ability and earnestness, learned to admire him more and more, so more and more did he acquire the habit of consulting him in all matters pertaining to the administration of the diocese. In every difficulty which arose he sought the advice of Francis de Sales, and it became public knowledge that he looked upon the counsels given on these occasions as so many oracles. It was only to be expected that such confidence on the part of the Bishop for one so young as the Provost should arouse a certain amount of jealousy, and that this jealousy should strive to spoil the relations between the two. There were certain people who, not being able to endure the evidence of the high esteem in which Mgr. de Granier held the Provost, strove to instil suspicions of the latter into the Bishop's mind. They suggested that M. de Sales was a perpetual censor who disapproved of his superior's method of government, if not in positive terms, at least by equivocal and spiteful expressions, all the more perfidious in that they made the criticisms more venomous: he was an intriguer, who wished to set himself up as master, who desired to get the upper hand of the Bishop, who had the art of gaining over the people, of getting himself followed and applauded, to the great prejudice of the episcopal dignity which seemed no longer of any account: he was, in fine, a reformer, who wanted to change everything according to the ideas of his own conceit, and upon whom it was most urgent to place a restraint. Unless the Bishop took action speedily, he would one day have occasion to regret his present excessive indulgence. In order to give strength to these odious imputations, the calumniators represented this supposed hostile attitude as a sort of family tradition, and in this connection recalled the violent opposition which one of the Provost's near relatives had formerly shown to Claude de Granier himself, when the latter was still Prior of Talloires. The good Bishop, too charitable to give complete credence to these complaints, and too prudent to cause an open rupture, let the talk go on, and kept silence. He desired to wait until time, dissipating all doubts, should reveal the truth in its own light, and he was unwilling to believe evil except on the strongest proofs. Nevertheless, without being aware of it and, as it were, in spite of himself, he no longer showed towards Francis the same affection as of yore. This fact was quickly noticed by the Provost, who was keenly sensitive with regard to his friends: he soon became convinced by a certain subtle change of attitude, an almost imperceptible alteration of accent in the Bishop's manner, that the latter was no longer the same to him. Strong in the consciousness of his own loyalty, and sure of his innocence in everything that touched the service of his Ordinary, the Saint suffered this trial in silence, without giving the slightest sign either to the Bishop or to anyone else that he had noticed the change. He continued to fulfil his ordinary functions as usual, and appeared regularly at all those assemblies in which it was his duty to take part for the administration of diocesan affairs. At length the Bishop, tired of these suspicions against a man whom he could not help loving and admiring, took Francis aside one day, and frankly revealed to him all that was troubling his mind. The Provost listened with a calmness and composure that went a long way to proving his absolute innocence: then he set himself to answer each accusation in turn. Scarcely, however, had he begun his defence, when he found himself affectionately interrupted by the Bishop. Convinced of his sincerity, Mgr. de Granier made him understand that his barest and most general denial was a sufficient refutation of the charges; that the Bishop himself was filled with indignation against the calumniators, and that, not only would he withdraw from them his confidence, but would send them away from his entourage and would treat them with all possible severity. Francis sought a saint's revenge upon his detractors by immediately taking upon him their defence. He begged the Bishop to forgive them, urging every extenuating circumstance in their favour, and finally, when the episcopal indignation remained obdurate, flung himself down upon his knees and remained there until he was certain that his request was granted, and that no more attention would be paid to the matter. The whole incident ended with a complete restoration of the former relations that had existed between bishop and priest: the only change that could be noticed was an increase of mutual love and confidence, such as was bound to result from the removal of the misunderstanding and the consequent banishing of all future doubt.

It is impossible to quote in full the numerous letters of St Francis which have been preserved to us, both because our space does not allow the insertion of their length and because there is much in them that might not be of interest to the reader of to-day. But certain passages in them merit quotation or mention, because they give us glimpses of the saint's everyday life, of the very human touches of his character, and of the conditions under which the people of Savoy lived in those days. In a letter written probably at the beginning of February, 1594, we find him recovering from one of those fevers to which he was so addicted. "I felt myself so completely inundated with joy on reading your letter," he writes to Antoine Favre, "that I could not have desired any other remedy more likely to give me back my health. However, thanks be to God, I was already quite well again." The attack seems, according to his description, to have been a light one, giving him little or no pain, and he uses the diminutive *febricula* to denote its insignificance. In the same letter he speaks of their passing the time of the Carnival together. "Since you have bidden me hope that we shall be together and in good health this coming Carnival time, I have been filled with such joy by the prospect that no one, sick and tired of Lenten fare, can long for Easter Day as I do now for Carnival. For then we shall revive amongst us that ancient custom of Christian social life by which, on the approach of Lent, friends were wont to unite in convivial celebration and, for the sake of honest recreation, to make some cessation of their daily work. It was as though by this means they took leave of one another to enter into that long period of silence in which they were to sit alone and without speech, striving to lift their minds to higher things." This pleasure in the thought of a reasonable and innocent Carnival is very far removed from the irrational austerity of the Puritan.

He was, however, no lover of what we may call social events. He was explaining in this letter that his family would not be at home during the Carnival on account of a friend's wedding, which was to take place at that time. "If you come here," he writes, "I shall take care not to go elsewhere except with you. Even if you should not come, I should not assist at this festivity. For how should I go to a wedding, I who have not *a wedding garment?* Moreover, I have a dread of such gatherings and feasts." As a matter of fact, he very nearly had to go, in order to represent his mother, at her special request; but at the last moment she was enabled to be present herself.*

In another letter he recommends to his friend the cause of a widow who had been dragged into an unjust lawsuit before the Senate of Chambéry. "A noblewoman," he writes, "Mme. de Ville, the widow of the gentleman who some years ago, thanks to the treachery of the (Genevan) heretics, was attacked and killed, while his château was burned to the ground, is awaiting these days the decision of a lawsuit which is being pleaded before the Senate." On the advice of Mme. de Boisy, the lady in question had sought the Saint's help, and he accordingly ventured to commend her cause to the good will of Antoine Favre. The Senate eventually gave its decision in favour of Mme. de Ville. In this letter Francis also recommends his friend to go and hear the preaching of Father Chérubin, of whom we shall hear often in these pages. "I hear," writes Francis, "that he preaches with such fervour that we must needs in this connection paraphrase the psalm: *God arose and took his flight, borne upon the Cherubim*" (Ps. xvii 11).†

In April the Provost wrote to Antoine Favre a letter which gives us a glimpse of his absorption in his duties, and, amongst other things, of the difficulties of even the smallest journeys in those days. "What am I to do, my brother, and whither shall I turn, who have not yet satisfied your ardent desire, and am now utterly unable to do so for want of time? For here we are within a few days of the Synod, which all the clergy of the province are bound to attend and from which I cannot absent myself without drawing down excommunication upon my head! After that there follows for several days the arranging of the affairs of our ecclesiastical commonwealth, from all of which, in spite of my uselessness, the will of my most reverend Bishop and father will not suffer me to be away.

"But really, the day before yesterday, when I had come here in order to go to you the next day with M. Coppier, after I had walked through the pouring rain for about three miles, a thing happened to me which, you can imagine, I had never foreseen: for I found in front of me a raging torrent which I was unable to cross at any place, no matter where I went. And so I was forced to return. This was the reason why I was unable to join M. Coppier, who was making his way without difficulty along the opposite shore of the lake."*

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* E.N., Tom. XI, Lettre XIV, p. 41.

† *Ibid.* Lettre XVII, p. 50.

In the meantime, Francis continued to watch over the Confraternity of the Holy Cross with every care, being anxious that the members should keep their first fervour up to its high level. For this purpose he conceived the idea of a pilgrimage to Aix, which lay about six leagues from Annecy. The Canons of the collegiate church of that town preserved in their care a notable relic of the true cross, which had been brought thither at the time of the first crusades by a nobleman of Aix on his return from the Holy Land. Andrew Malvenda, Prior of Aix in 1483, had had it enclosed in a cross of silver. A great veneration had been born throughout the land for this precious relic, the authenticity of which had been attested by several miracles. A favourable reception having been accorded to the Provost's idea by the members of the Confraternity, he at once set about making the necessary arrangements for the pilgrimage. The Confraternity of the Cross, established at Chambéry upon the model of that of Annecy, whose statutes it had adopted, soon received information of the new project: it was at once decided by its members that they also should form a pilgrimage and go to Aix on the same day, both to venerate the Cross in company with the pilgrims of Annecy and to form with them there an alliance of fraternal charity. Senator Favre, therefore, who was one of their leaders, wrote to the Provost to ascertain the date and the hour when the latter hoped to arrive at his destination and the order which he considered ought to be observed on the way. Francis answered as follows: "With the help of God we hope to make the pilgrimage to Aix, about which you write, on the Tuesday in Whit-week. The ceremonial will be no different from what you saw recently when you were here, and we shall recite the same litanies of Jesus crucified. We will loosen the shoes from our feet, because we regard the place to which we are going as holy, graced as it is with the most precious wood upon which God showed himself to our fathers with a charity far more ardent than even that in which he appeared to Moses in the burning bush. Nevertheless, we shall not perform the whole journey barefooted, but only for a few miles, and it is not without reason that we have decided upon this. Since it will be necessary to repair our strength by taking a little food, we have resolved that all of us shall go together to the same house, where we will dine modestly and frugally, listening meanwhile to the reading of some pious book, so that our pilgrimage shall not be interrupted by the usual kind of conversation. I can scarcely give you the exact hour, since a numerous crowd is joining us, against our will, in this pilgrimage, principally certain ladies who, because our Society has from the beginning admitted them to Holy Communion in our oratory and to our exercises of piety, insist on accompanying us now, and cannot be persuaded from this undertaking by any words of ours. We shall hear Mass in the church of the Holy Cross at Aix certainly before midday, and we even hope to arrive at ten or eleven in the morning, perhaps earlier. Since you are coming the same day, it would be best for you to wait there, because you are closer to our destination, and are not embarrassed by a number of people not strictly belonging to the pilgrimage."*

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* E.N., Tom. XI, Lettre XXII, p. 62.

Senator Favre read the letter, of which the above is an extract, before the members of the Confraternity of Chambéry, who willingly agreed to adopt its proposals.

On the Tuesday of Whit-week, therefore, the members of the Annecy Confraternity assembled very early in the morning at their oratory, and began the day's proceedings by hearing Mass, offered up on their behalf by the Provost. Then they set out on their pilgrimage in the order decreed by the rules of the Confraternity for such processions, with one or two changes suggested by the nature of this special occasion. First came the cross-bearer, carrying the processional crucifix, and attended by two of the brothers with lantern-torches: then followed the members of the pilgrimage, walking barefooted, two and two, dressed in habit and hood, and singing the litanies alternately with a choir. The Prior, with his two assessors, walked behind them: in accordance with the regulations of the Confraternity, he wore a surplice over his habit, dispensing consequently with the hood that formed part of the ordinary uniform. He, like the others, was barefooted. Behind the main body of the procession came a crowd of the faithful, composed doubtless of the good ladies who, as we have seen, persisted in attaching themselves to the pilgrimage, and probably of other people who, unable to imitate these, desired at any rate to accompany the procession for a part of the way. After proceeding about half their destined distance, the pilgrims stopped at a place called Albi, where they partook of a meal in accordance with the Prior's arrangement. Then once more they took to the road, anxious to arrive at Aix in good time. When they had advanced to within a mile or so of the town, they found their confrères of Chambéry awaiting them. The two bands of pilgrims, after greeting each other affectionately, formed themselves into one procession, and, thus united, entered the town and made their way to the church of the Holy Cross. Here the relic was exposed for their veneration, high Mass was sung, and an eloquent sermon preached to them by Father Chérubin Fournier: finally the pilgrims came up in turns to the sanctuary, where, in accordance with the usual Christian custom, they devoutly kissed the sacred reliquary. St Francis, when writing afterwards of the power of the Cross, recalled the memory of this occasion in the following words: "But, if I may be allowed to speak from experience, what devotion we saw enkindled amongst the two Confraternities of Annecy and Chambéry, when, having gone in procession to Aix, they had the happiness of seeing the sacred piece of the wood of the Cross, which is there preserved! No one could help shedding tears and sighing after the heavenly kingdom at the sight of that precious gage. How many holy resolutions for a better life in the future, and how many acts of contrition and regret for the past, were made on that occasion! Certain it is that the mere sight of a piece of wood would not have had this influence if, by its means, the all-powerful Passion of the Saviour had not been vividly represented."* The Provost himself experienced a wonderful access of fervour, and, in the presence of the Cross, renewed with all the force of his will the resolution he had formerly made of ever living as a disciple of Jesus crucified.

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* E.N., Tom. XI, p. 65.

The projected union of the Confraternities of Annecy and Chambéry was next dealt with: the two brotherhoods made an alliance of fraternal charity in the name of Jesus Christ, and placed themselves under the direction of Francis de Sales, whom they adopted as their common father. Another notable event of this pilgrimage was the beginning of a friendship between the Saint and Father Chérubin, who were afterwards to do such great things together for the glory of God in the mission of Chablais.

The next morning all the members of the Confraternity received Holy Communion, and spent a long time before the Sacred Relic in prayers of thanksgiving and in forming resolutions for their conduct in the future. Then, having accomplished the object of their pilgrimage, they began to make arrangements for the return. It so happened that a venerable nobleman, Berard de Pingon, Baron of Cusy, had been present at the devotions of the Confraternity, and he was so impressed by the conduct of the brothers, that he begged them as a favour to take on their return the route that lay through his lands. This kind invitation they accepted, the more willingly that it would lead them home by a shorter way, and that the château was a more suitable place than they would otherwise have found for their meal and rest. The procession, therefore, on leaving Aix, took the road to Cusy, accompanied this time by Senator Favre and several members of the Confraternity of Chambéry. At four o'clock of the afternoon they arrived at the hill on which the château of their host was situated. For a time a cessation of their religious exercises was decided upon, in order that they might have a little rest. While they were waiting for the preparation of their meal, the baron proposed that they should go down into the forest which lay at the foot of the hill, and take a walk among the winding paths which he had had constructed there. The invitation was accepted: but even then the spirit of pilgrimage was so strong upon them that they gave their recreation a religious turn. They occupied themselves with carving on the bark of the great beeches the sign of the cross, beneath which they cut the names of their patron saints, and then, finally, influenced by the silence and solitude of the forest, and finding themselves arched over by a cathedral of nature's building, they once more fell upon their knees in prayer. It needed a command from their Prior to break them away from their meditation, and even then he found it well to do so in a spirit which harmonized with their mood. "Brothers," he said to them, "here we are in the midst of darkness and the shadows of death: let us leave them and go up to the mountain of the Lord. But this mountain of the Lord, what is it but Calvary, up which he climbed beneath the burden of the cross? We must follow him thither, since he said, 'Whosoever doth not carry his cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple.' See, here before us are crosses almost already made or easy to make. Let each one carry his own up to the top of the hill, and by meditation follow our Lord in spirit as he mounts the sides of Calvary." They all immediately sought among the branches recently cut those which they could easily fashion to their purpose, and then, bearing each a cross upon his shoulders, they went in silence up the hill to the château. Arrived at the top, they laid their crosses down, and, entering the house, passed into the banqueting-hall. A magnificent banquet lay awaiting them. "But what is this?" exclaimed the Provost. "We thought to go up to Calvary, and find ourselves on Thabor. It is thus that *through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God*: it was thus that it was *necessary that Christ should suffer and so enter into his glory*." Then all sat down to the generous fare provided by their kind host, who, however, was greatly edified on seeing how they took their food with the moderation of true pilgrims, and how, even then, their conversation turned on religious subjects and upon their recent spiritual experience in the church of the Holy Cross. As the growing darkness made departure that evening impossible, the baron had the happiness of keeping his guests with him for the night. The next morning, after thanking their host for his great hospitality, they said farewell to him and to those of their brothers of Chambéry who had come with them thus far. Then, making their way homewards, they arrived safely at last in the town of Annecy, edified and strengthened by the pilgrimage beyond all their expectations.

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* *Defense de l'Estendard de la sainte Croix*, l. i, chap. viii.

Several days later, on June 10, Francis went off to preach at La

Roche. He passed the following month in the society of his friend, Antoine Favre, with whom he went for one or two days to the monastery of Hautecombe as the guest of the Abbot of that place, Alphonsus del Bene, the Bishop of Albi. In a letter written from this place to François Girard, Provost of the church of Notre Dame of Bourg, he says: "This is the nineteenth day of a most delightful time that I have been spending with our mutual friend, my brother Favre . . . we came yesterday to this holy and august solitude of Hautecombe to see the Bishop of Albi, a most learned prelate, who holds our Favre in the greatest affection. . . ."*

On his return to Annecy the Provost immediately set to work upon his accustomed duties. These, however, were not his sole care, as we shall see from the following incident. It happened that at this time there dwelt in Annecy two families who were divided by a long-standing feud, and that this feud was the cause of much disturbance in the city by the fact that a number of the citizens were drawn into the quarrel on behalf of one or other of the parties. The knowledge of this state of affairs distressed Francis to such an extent that he knew no peace of mind until he had put an end to it. He sought out the principal chiefs of the two factions, and in order to bring them into agreement employed all the persuasion that his ardent charity suggested to him. At the beginning, however, he met with nothing but failure: the dissidents appeared to be irreconcilable. Accordingly he had recourse to his usual means in time of difficulty. He prayed long and perseveringly, he fasted, and he offered up the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. One day, on coming out of a church where he had been praying for this same object, he happened to meet one of the men whose feelings in the quarrel were the bitterest. He at once addressed him, begging him in the most earnest manner to effect a reconciliation. Though this man affected to refuse the Saint's request, the latter nevertheless perceived that he was wavering in his resolution. Francis insisted, pressing him with all his charm and eloquence, and at length obtaining of him a promise that he would do all that his honour allowed him to obtain a settlement of the affair. From this interview the Provost at once hastened off to urge his views upon the chief of the opposite party. Here he met with a similar resistance; but, employing the same persuasive force of charity, he induced this gentleman also to make a like concession. A meeting was soon arranged between the two chiefs in the presence of the Provost. After much debate and a lengthy discussion of the terms of the agreement, a reconciliation was effected; the two gentlemen promised a mutual forgiveness of all wrongs, and embraced each other as friends. That reconciliation was a lasting one, and in place of the enmity which had previously existed, there succeeded a frank and permanent friendship.

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* E. N., Tom. XI, Lettre XXVI, p. 74.

As we have already seen, the Provost did not restrict the action of his energy to Annecy alone, but was ever ready to go wherever his services were demanded. Having been begged by the Curé of Annecy-le-Vieux to help him in celebrating the patronal feast of St Lawrence on August 10, the Saint gave his willing consent. His reputation as a preacher, joined with the fact that this parish was but a short distance from the city, was the means of attracting an enormous crowd on the day of the feast. Knowing that where there was a multitude of people gathered together for the celebration of such a day there was also a great danger of disorders amongst those of the crowd who were drawn more by the holiday side of the occasion than by its spiritual aspect, Francis resolved so to arrange the day that the folk, held almost the whole time in church by the various devotional exercises, should have little or no time for dancing, games, and drinking at the inns. The project was difficult to execute: but the eloquence of the Provost was so successful in revealing to the people the full beauty and interest of the various functions—high Mass, sermon, catechism, procession and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament—that he fully obtained his object. Thus this patronal feast, which for some had been a subject of apprehension, was a happy day of success for the cause of religion and a lasting revival of grace in the breasts of many of those who attended it.

CHAPTER VII *

(1593--1595)

Short history of Chablais—Francis volunteers to work in this province—Opposition of M. de Boisy—Francis and Canon Louis de Sales set out on their missionary work—Arrival at Allinges—First sermon at St Hippolytus—Opposition of the Calvinists—Difficulties and dangers of Francis—He writes leaflets, which afterwards become the "Controversies"—Description of this work—Work amongst the soldiers at Allinges—Francis takes up his abode at Thonon

IN the latter half of the year 1593 the Bishop of Geneva received a letter from Charles Emmanuel I, Duke of Savoy, asking him to send missionaries to the town of Thonon, with a view to beginning the conversion of Chablais, of which this place was the capital.

In order to understand the significance of this move, it is necessary to go back some years in the history of Savoy. Chablais is a province extending along the southern shores of the lake of Geneva. Its principal towns are Thonon, Evian, Yvoire, and Hermance: and in the days of which we are writing it was divided into about sixty parishes, containing some eighty thousand souls. It was bounded on the east by the country of Valais, on the south by the mountains of Faucigny, and on the west by the river Arve and the republic of Geneva. For a long time it had been in the possession of the counts of Savoy. In the year 1536, however, Savoy, under Duke Charles III, suffered conquest at the hands of Francis I of France, who took possession of it and converted it for the time into a French province. The people of Berne, who had already fallen away from the Catholic Church under the heresies of Luther and Zwingli, took this opportunity of enlarging their territory. They first overran the lordships of Gex and Ternier, and then invaded Chablais, which, in consequence of the French invasion of Savoy, was at that time without defence. They brought under their power all that part of the province situated to the west of the Drance, a river which passes through the middle of Chablais and falls into the lake of Geneva: about the same time the Valaisians, who still remained Catholics, took possession of the eastern part of the province. The Genevans, meanwhile, had not been idle on their part, and had in a similar manner usurped the lordship of Gaillard, which lay next to their city: this country, however, they did not hold for long, but ceded it by treaty to the republic of Berne in August, 1536. Upon this the Bernese divided all their newly acquired territory into four bailiwicks or counties, giving them the designation of Thonon, Ternier, Gaillard and Gex. For the first few months the conquerors permitted the free exercise of religion; but the preaching of their ministers, whom they had sent thither to propagate the new doctrines, was the cause of a serious riot in the town of Thonon, where the inhabitants were unwilling to listen to them at any price. In consequence of this, the Bernese forbade the exercise of the Catholic religion throughout the province, pulled down the crosses and statues, silenced the bells, banished those of the clergy who would not apostatize, and drove out the nuns from their houses, providing them, however, with a pension, if they went to the homes of their parents. Almost everywhere ministers of the new religion were established in the place of the banished priests.

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* Hamon, l. ii, chap. ii.

This state of things continued until the year 1564. At that date Emmanuel Philibert, son and successor of Charles III, managed by means of his military prowess and by his marriage with Margaret, the sister of Henry II of France, to regain from that country all the territory that had been conquered by Francis I. As a consequence of this turn of fortune, the people of Berne were forced to come to terms with the now powerful duke, and by treaties, negotiated by M. de Boisy in the year 1564, they ceded to Savoy the western part of the province of Chablais, with this condition, nevertheless, that the Protestant religion alone should be allowed exercise, and that no Catholic worship should be tolerated. Much against his will, Emmanuel Philibert was obliged to consent to this condition for political reasons. Persuaded, however, that his enemies had only retired through fear induced by the brilliance of his military achievements, and that they would not fail to renew their attempts at conquest as soon as they found a favourable opportunity, he founded, in concert with Pope Gregory XIII, the order of the Knights of SS Maurice and Lazarus, whose mission it was to watch over the defence of the country. In order to ensure means of existence to the members of this Order, the Pope assigned to them all ecclesiastical property in Chablais and the other restored counties, in which, as we have seen, the ancient worship had been abolished: yet this was done on the express condition that, as soon as catholicity should once more be allowed to exercise its rights, the knights should provide out of their ecclesiastical properties an annual revenue of at least fifty ducats to each priest and parish re-established by the bishops. However beneficial this transaction may have been at the time, we shall find that it afterwards became the source of innumerable difficulties: it is so much easier to receive than to restore. Things were in this condition when the death of Emmanuel Philibert placed his son, Charles Emmanuel I, on the throne of Savoy. Inasmuch as we shall see a good deal of this Prince in the history of subsequent events, it may be as well to say a few words about him in this place. Possessed of a keen mind and a tenacious memory, he was well educated in the attainments necessary to his position, and he was said to speak with eloquence and grace the three languages of French, Italian, and Spanish. He was affable in his manners, generous in his disposition, and clever in the management of affairs. Of his zeal for the Catholic faith there can be no doubt, though, like most politicians and not a few churchmen, he occasionally took questionable means to support it. His military talent was such that the greatest soldier of the times, Henry IV of France, used to say that he only knew two captains worthy of the name, of whom one was Maurice of Nassau, Prince of Orange, and the other Charles Emmanuel. But the Duke was not without serious faults. His ambition surpassed all bounds, and in the pursuit of his aims he was frequently guilty of inexcusable dissimulation, if not worse: alluding to this trait of his character, his enemies declared that his heart, like his country, was inaccessible. This want of honesty, at any rate in politics, gained for him a reputation for being unfaithful to his alliances, so that it was also said of him in irony that he wore a coat, red on one side and white on the other, and that he changed it each morning according to the party whose colour he wished to bear. It is absolutely certain that his habit of dissimulation, as well as his claims to the marquisate of Saluzzo, lost him in after years the friendship of Henry IV, and did not save him from defeat at the hands of that astute monarch both in the realms of diplomacy and on the field of battle.

In 1589 there came to the young Prince the opportunity for which his father had always longed. The Bernese, seeing the dissatisfaction of Henry III of France with Charles Emmanuel, on account of the latter's invasion of the marquisate of Saluzzo, thought it a good opportunity for a little profitable business on their own behalf. They entered Chablais with a force of ten thousand men, and subjected the country to the cruellest ravages and the most unheard-of impieties. On learning this news, Charles Emmanuel set out from Turin, assembled an army of more than fourteen thousand men, regained in a few weeks all the captured territory, and signed a favourable treaty at Nyon on October 11. By this treaty it was agreed that the two religions should be free, that of the Reformation in seven places and that of the Catholic faith everywhere. This having been settled, the Duke immediately asked the Bishop of Geneva to re-establish curés in the parishes of Chablais and Ternier: and the Bishop, in accordance with this request, sent out some fifty priests, amongst whom was one named François Bochut, destined to be for a time the parish priest of Thonon. Under the influence of these missionaries a number of the inhabitants embraced once more the teachings of the Catholic Church.

This, however, was not the last word in the matter. When the Duke withdrew his troops in order to lead them into Provence, the people of Geneva seized upon the opportunity and ravaged the unfortunate country once again. With the connivance of the principal burghers of Thonon, they took possession of that town on February 17, 1593, and for nearly three years remained practical masters of the whole of the disputed country. The fortress of Allinges was the only place that was actually in the possession of the Duke of Savoy. The result of this last invasion was disastrous. The priests sent by the Bishop either fled or were driven from their posts; several, amongst whom was François Bochut, were for a time exposed to the gravest dangers; and the new converts, abandoned by their priests and exposed to the tyranny of the triumphant Calvinists, soon gave in their submission and lapsed once more into heresy.

Then came another change. The conversion of Henry IV of France to the Catholic religion again altered the whole complexion of affairs in the neighbourhood of Geneva. Henry, while naturally feeling sympathy with those who had formerly been his allies, could now no longer give them open support: the Protestants of Geneva and Berne, therefore, realized immediately that once more they were threatened from the direction of Savoy by dangers such as they could not hope to overcome without the help of France. Accordingly they thought it politic to demand a truce from the Duke, and proposed at once to give up Chablais and Ternier, though at the same time not relinquishing their claim on the districts of Gex and Gaillard. Moreover, be it said by way of parenthesis, while they thus suggested the surrender of Chablais and Ternier, they still remained for some time the practical masters even of these two districts.

As soon as the truce was concluded, Charles Emmanuel again began to deliberate over the means of recalling to the Catholic faith the inhabitants of the two restored counties. He judged that the best thing to do was to try and bring them back gradually by persuasion with the help of zealous, learned and exemplary preachers, and he wrote to Mgr. de Granier, asking him to send missionaries at least to the town of Thonon. The duke's officers who resided there and the garrison, which occupied the château of Allinges, would see to their safety and protect them from any violence on the part of the Calvinists.

Glad as the Bishop was to receive this letter, it nevertheless placed him in great difficulty. Enlightened by the disastrous experiences elated above, he saw how hard it would be to find priests willing and fit for this difficult task. Casting his thoughts over the subjects at his disposal, he naturally fixed upon Francis de Sales as the one above all others who could with some chance of success undertake the hazardous mission. Everything, indeed, pointed to the Provost: the influence and good name of his family, the dignity of his position in the Chapter, his genuine piety, his deep learning, his unalterable gentleness and patience, and his great reputation for sanctity—all marked him out as the one man for the task. But, on the other hand, it was not to be expected that the family of Sales would look upon such an idea with any favour. The Bishop especially foresaw the certainty of opposition on the part of M. de Boisy: if that worthy nobleman had once objected so strongly to his son's priesthood, what would he not do to prevent that son undertaking such a dangerous enterprise as the conversion of Chablai? In his perplexity the good Bishop recommended the matter to God with fervent prayer, fastings and mortifications, as he was accustomed to do whenever he was faced with any difficulty that he felt to be beyond his natural powers. After having considered the matter for some time, he resolved upon his plan of campaign, and then, hastening to put it into execution, he immediately convoked an assembly of the Cathedral Canons and of a certain number of the more eminent clerics of his diocese. The meeting was held on August 10, 1594. As soon as the Canons and other ecclesiastics were assembled, the Bishop proceeded to lay before them the difficulty which was engaging his attention: he described the unhappy conditions of the province of Chablais, reminded his audience of the course of recent events, and then read to them the letter which he had just received from the Duke of Savoy. It was a question of volunteers: and he had called them together to find out if such could be obtained.

"We cannot fail," said the Bishop, "to recognize the will of God in that of the Prince who has so urgently commanded us to send preachers into Chablais. What an inestimable opportunity is this for the ministers of Jesus Christ, those ministers whom he has established as his agents upon earth, that they may carry on, not a temporal trade for the gaining of money, but a spiritual traffic, the business of which is to save the souls redeemed by the precious Blood of Jesus Christ! It is true that in the present case this business calls for heavy toil, and opens up a vista of dangers capable of terrifying the bravest hearts. But do we not every day see merchants, enticed by the vile attraction of earthly gain, braving the reefs and perils of the ocean and penetrating into the furthermost ends of the world, utterly undeterred by the thought of the labours and dangers to be endured? Will the ministers of Jesus Christ, influenced by much nobler motives, allow themselves to be overcome by a cowardly timidity? No, assuredly no! I do my clergy greater justice than to doubt for one moment that I shall still be able to find amongst them courageous men, ready to devote themselves to the conversion of these heretics. Doubtless, courage alone is not sufficient: there is needed, in addition, a rare union of high qualities, to guarantee success in so important and difficult a work. This thought has led me to gather you around me, in order that you may help me with your counsels, and in order that you may point out to me those in whom you think I shall find the will and the capabilities needed for the worthy accomplishment of this mission."*

When the Bishop had finished speaking, there ensued what can only be called an eloquent silence. These men knew the Calvinists of Geneva: they had seen things with their own eyes, or were at least in possession of first-hand evidence. They remembered, moreover, the experiences of the last curé of Thonon at the hands of the gentle burghers of that town. It would be unfair to tax them either with want of zeal or with cowardice, but the probability is that, knowing the history of the past, their optimism as to results was not such as to make the necessary sacrifices look either useful or glorious. Consequently, for a short time no one spoke. All eyes, however, were turned upon the young Provost, whose place it was, as head of the Chapter, to give the first expression of opinion as to the matter in hand. Doubtless, also, they guessed what was likely to be passing in his mind. Francis rose from his place, and turning to the Bishop, said: "My Lord, if you think me capable of this mission, and if you order me to undertake it, I am ready to obey, and I shall hold myself happy in your choice. *In thy word I will let down the net.*" As he spoke these words, his countenance was seen to shine with a mysterious splendour—a splendour that was not merely the fire of human enthusiasm and exaltation, but a veritable miracle of grace, bearing the stamp of the supernatural and revealing for a certainty the divine origin of the inspiration which was the motive of his heroic offer.† That such an offer was expected by the Bishop was evident from the manner in which he received it, and his face lit up with strong and affectionate approval as he immediately rejoined: "Not only do I think you eminently suited for this office, but, since you occupy the first place in my diocese, it seems to me fitting indeed that you should be the chief of this enterprise and the leader in this career of zeal. Had you failed me, I should have been obliged, in spite of my feebleness and ill-health, to have gone myself upon this mission. I thank you for relieving me of the burden."

Thus it was decided that Francis was to become the apostle of Chablais, and the initial difficulty was settled. But it was not long before trouble appeared on the horizon. M. de Boisy, who was living at this time in the château at Thorens, was soon told of the new project by his friends. For him it was like a thunderbolt. Thus to send his beloved son, the object of so much love and hope, into the midst of the heretics, was tantamount in his eyes to a sentence of death. The energetic old nobleman at once took measures to prevent this sacrifice. In spite of his seventy years, he mounted his horse without waste of time, rode into Annecy, made his way into his son's house, and straightway, with all the eloquence and affection of his being, gave vent to his protest against the new idea. Francis, knowing that this opposition sprang from his father's love, was deeply moved: yet his resolution remained invincible. "God wills it," he said: "I must obey. I can only trust that his goodness will give you courage and resignation to make the necessary sacrifice." His father, however, insisted, and conjured him again and again to give up the undertaking: yet nothing he could say was effective to shake the determination which the Provost had taken. "Very well, then," exclaimed the old nobleman, in his grief and vexation, "come with me at once to the Bishop. He at least, I am sure, will not resist, as you are doing, the tears of a father and the voice of reason." They immediately made their way to the Bishop's house, and scarcely had they entered into the presence of Mgr. de Granier than M. de Boisy fell upon his knees before the Bishop in the earnestness of his appeal. "My Lord," he exclaimed, "I permitted my eldest son, who was the hope of my house, of my old age and of my life, to vow himself to the Church in order that he might become a *confessor*, but I cannot consent that he should be made a *martyr*, and that you should send him to the butchery, like a victim, to be torn to pieces by these wolves." The Bishop, who held M. de Boisy in much love and respect, was moved to tears at the sight of the father's grief, and for the time could find no words to answer him. Francis alone had sufficient control over himself to make a reply: alluding to himself, he reminded the prelate with all tact and gentleness that his character as a priest obliged him to imitate Jesus Christ, and to say to his parents what that divine Master answered to Mary and Joseph, when they reproached him with having left them: *Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?*" But M. de Boisy, far from giving in, redoubled his protestations, and did so with such force and such vehemence of grief that the Bishop, still deeply moved, seemed on the point of surrendering. "My Lord," exclaimed the young priest, with apostolic energy, "hold firm. What! would you then make me unworthy of the kingdom of God? I have put my hand to the plough: do you want me to look back for the sake of human considerations?" Roused by this apostrophe, the Bishop succeeded in mastering his feelings, and, turning to M. de Boisy, said to him: "Remember, sir, that you both bear the name of

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* Hamon, l. ii, chap. ii. Pérennès, l. ii, chap. v, p. 141.

† Dep. of Canon Jean Gard, who learned this fact from Georges Rolland.

St Francis of Assisi. Beware lest your resistance should lead your son to imitate his patron, to cast off his very clothes, as did St Francis, and to give them back to you in my presence, so as to follow, thus stripped of all things, the standard of Jesus crucified." As the distracted father still persisted in his expostulations, the Bishop went on to remind him of the example of Abraham, who not only had not resisted the will of God, when it was a matter of the death of his son, but had even taken the knife into his own hands in order to sacrifice him. M. de Boisy, at the thought of this father immolating his own son, was plunged into deeper grief than ever. Rising from his knees, with the tears of despair running down his cheeks, he brokenly answered: "I do not mean to resist the will of God: but neither do I want to be the murderer of my son, and I myself am not worthy that an angel should come and stop the blow which might sacrifice this Isaac. That is why I refuse to consent to the immolation: and so far as I am concerned, I shall oppose it with all my strength. For the rest, may God dispose of things according to his own good pleasure." Francis, seizing upon these last words, flung himself on his knees before his grief-stricken parent. "Father," he said, "I beg you, grant me the favour not only not to resist, but even to encourage me by giving me your blessing." "My son," answered M. de Boisy, "I have often received your blessing at the holy Mass, in the confessional and at your sermons: God preserve me ever from calling down upon you any sort of malediction, corporal or spiritual. But be assured of this, that never will you have either blessing or consent of mine for this present enterprise." With these words the old nobleman left his son with the Bishop, and made his way in grief to the château of Sales.*

M. de Boisy, however, was tenacious. He conceived the idea of pressing into his service a great friend of the family, Baron Gaspard de Lullin, to whom he communicated his trouble. He begged this friend to go and see Francis, and to make the young priest understand the grave peril in which he was about to risk his honour and his life: his honour, because this enterprise had so little chance of success; his life, because he was going to expose himself to the well-known hatred of the heretics. The baron, acceding to his friend's request, called upon Francis and used all his eloquence in representing the dangers of the task which the Provost had undertaken. The latter listened to his friend with patience and courtesy: then, putting before him his own view of the matter, he proceeded to explain his reasons for volunteering to take up this missionary work. So admirably was this done that Baron de Lullin was completely converted, and, though he had come as an ambassador in the other sense, promised Francis to do all in his power to bring about a change in M. de Boisy's convictions. On returning to the château, the baron reported the failure of his mission, and then went on to admit frankly that he himself now considered Francis to be in the right. "I recognized in your son," he said, "an impulse so manifestly divine that I should have considered myself worthy of blame if I had not confirmed him in his project. You should be only too happy to have a son so evidently dear to God, and you are too good and too God-fearing yourself to oppose his will in the accomplishment of a design which will bring such glory to his name, will exalt the Church, will do honour to Savoy, and will give to your own house a greater lustre than do all its other titles, however excellent they may be."* But even to this friend, and to the wise counsels thus given by him, M. de Boisy found it impossible to surrender. Two things only could he see—the danger and the impossibility of the task which had been allotted to his son, and with his mind fixed on these he felt it contrary to his conscience and his father's love to approve of what seemed to him the courting of a useless and inglorious peril. Francis had therefore to resign himself or to going forth upon his mission without his father's blessing consent.

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* Pérennès quotes De Baudry, MS, and Hauteville's *Maison de Sales*, p. 189.

A certain number of priests had offered to accompany the Provost and to work under his direction for the conversion of Chablais. But the latter wished to avoid at the very beginning of his enterprise anything that might create a stir among the people of Thonon, such as was likely to be caused by the arrival of a large body of ecclesiastics. He took with him, therefore, only his cousin, Canon Louis de Sales. This good priest was particularly fitted to assist in the work. He possessed in an eminent degree the gentleness and patience of character that would be needed, and was, moreover, endowed with a clear, methodical mind and a calm sanity of judgement. He was not likely to create embarrassments by ill-advised and hasty action or to lose his head in a moment of crisis. His theological knowledge was thorough and extensive, and he was able to utilize that knowledge to the full by means of a genuine talent for preaching. It is probable that in taking only this one companion Francis also remembered that his enterprise at first partook rather of the nature of an ecclesiastical reconnaissance than of an attack in force. This idea is expressed in a letter written afterwards to St Peter Canisius in the month of June, 1595: "I have been sent out to see whether there may not be some means of recalling the sheep that have wandered by dint of sermons and conferences: as soon as they show themselves disposed to listen to the word of God, the Bishop will send good workers into the harvest."† Which expresses what the Provost meant, even though the metaphors be rather mixed.

The two missionaries immediately began the preparations for their journey: these were as simple and meagre as possible. With regard to their physical well-being, they took with them only what was strictly necessary: for their intellectual and spiritual needs they chose but three books, their breviaries, the Bible and the *Controversies* of Blessed Robert Bellarmine. Before leaving, they went round to the Canons and to other priests of Annecy, in order to beg these confrères to assist their missionary labours by prayer and by offering up frequently for their intention the holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Then they went for a last interview with Mgr. de Granier. The Bishop gave them letters and faculties for their new work, as also the credential letters sent by the Duke of Savoy: then, having imparted to them his blessing, he embraced them both with every sign of affection and feeling. They left Annecy on September 9, 1594, bearing with them the good wishes of their many friends, and the assurance that their absence during the years to follow would be to these a heavy loss.

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* Pérennès quotes dep. of Albert de Lullin.

† E.N., Tom. XI, Lettre LIV, p. 140.

Their first stopping-place was the château of Sales, which lay upon their route; and here, almost needless to say, Francis had to undergo renewed protestations on the part of his father. M. de Boisy forbade him in the severest terms to enter the province of Chablais. After alluding to the perils in front of them and to the small chances of success, his father went on to say: "And do you not really see that if, after spending several years in this labour, you are forced to return empty-handed, you will become the laughing-stock of the world? It is not that I do not appreciate your zeal, which is good; but, of a certainty, you are not giving sufficient thought to your chances of success, which are uncertain in the extreme."

To all this Francis answered: "Father, *God will provide.* It is he who helps the brave, and all we have to do is to take courage. We are not dealing with barbarians, and are not, by the way, altogether unknown to them. We are not going among them in order to pillage and to sack: but are intending to attack them with spiritual weapons only. They will do us no bodily harm, and God, according to his promise, will give great power to our word in order that we may preach the truth of his gospel. How would it be if we had been sent to India or to England? Should we not have had to go? That, indeed, would be a journey to be desired with all our hearts, and the death which we might undergo for Jesus Christ would be worth more than a thousand triumphs! But for the rest, see here the express will of his most Serene Highness, and here also the orders and the faculties given to us by our most Reverend Bishop: there is no longer any room for opposition. It is an undertaking full of labour and trial, it is true: but why do we wear these cassocks, if we are unwilling to accept the responsibilities which they represent? Put away from you all your doubts, dear Father: *the Lord knoweth the* *way of the just: and the way of the wicked shall perish.*"* But M. de Boisy, still fixed in his idea, could see in this trenchant answer only the exaltation of a young man, carried away by his own enthusiasm. Crossing his arms and shrugging his shoulders in a gesture of pity, he ejaculated: "I do not know what to say to you. Do what you will—just in your own way. But if evil befall you, it will be your own fault." Not once only but several times during the next day or two had Francis to endure these assaults of his father's love and obstinacy. At last, seeing that no result came from these interviews, M. de Boisy made up his mind to leave the château without bidding farewell to his son. He therefore departed to La Thuille. Though inexorable in his purpose of showing no encouragement to the expedition, he nevertheless gave Francis a letter of recommendation to the Governor of the château of Allinges, and also wrote from La Thuille to others of his friends in Chablais, begging them to use every means to protect his son from danger.

In the meanwhile the two Canons were occupied in preparing for their mission. This they did by making a retreat, and the whole of September 12 was passed in fasting, mortification and prayer, prolonged into a late hour of the night. On the 13th "in order to go forth," they said, "with the greatest humility and purity possible, to combat the pride and obstinacy of the heretics," they each of them made a general confession. The evening of that day Francis said goodbye to his mother. Mme. de Boisy's conduct had been admirable throughout. Much as she loved her son, and full of anxiety as she was for his safety, she nevertheless saw that the danger and labour he was about to undergo were the necessary consequence of his priesthood and of the particular gifts which she knew him to possess. In tears, therefore, yet full of Christian resignation, this admirable mother said farewell to the Provost and his companion, nor did she breathe a word that was calculated to turn them from their purpose. After this final interview Francis and his cousin spent a part of the night in prayer before the altar of the family chapel. The next day, the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, they set out early in the morning for the last stage of the journey which was to bring them to their destination. Like the Apostles of old, they made their way on foot, unaccompanied by any of their servants, and with barely enough money to carry them through the first period of their labours. M. de Boisy had expressly forbidden that any of the family servants should accompany the missionaries, or that anything should be given them which might help them in their journey. By this means he hoped that before long the lack of the very means of existence would effect what his prayers and entreaties had been unable to accomplish. He knew that, while the Duke of

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* C. A. de S., l. ii, p. 94.

Savoy had expressed his wish that missionaries should be sent to Chablais, that Prince had curiously enough forgotten to contribute any funds for the fulfilment of his august commands. Consequently the missionaries were obliged to rely on their own resources, and these were scant indeed. They were full of confidence, however, in the goodness and protection of almighty God, and went on their way with that joy and peace of heart which the accomplishment of duty always brings in its train.

Francis already knew the country through which he was to pass. For while he was at school in the college of Annecy, M. de Boisy had been obliged to leave the château of Sales and to stay for some time at Brens in Chablais. Consequently, during the holidays at this period, Francis had become acquainted with the neighbourhood, and his knowledge now served him in good stead. As soon as the travellers had crossed the stream of the Chandouze, which, separating the commune of Juvigny from that of St Cergues, formed in those days the boundary of Chablais, they made a halt for the purpose of prayer. They first of all saluted the angel guardian of the province, then, turning their thoughts to the God of all, they begged him to drive forth from the land the evil spirits which held the inhabitants chained in heresy, and to bless with success the work to which his servants were about to devote themselves. Charles Auguste tells us that the Provost and his companion made a custom of reciting within themselves a similar exorcism every time that they were called upon to dispute with the Calvinists, and especially in the case of the ministers: for Francis used to say that all heretics, but especially those who preach and instruct, are possessed or obsessed by the devil, and that for this reason it is a good thing to exorcise them before proceeding to a disputation.* When the two priests had finished their prayers, they resumed their journey, and travelling all day, excepting the time necessary for food and rest, they reached by eventide the foot of the hill on which stood the castle of Allinges. This fortress, which may be said to have dominated the whole province of Chablais, was commanded at the time by François Melchior de St Jeoire, Baron d'Hermance, and it was to him that the Provost had to present his letters of introduction. The baron was no stranger to Francis, being an old friend of the family, and, indeed, the earliest of the Saint's letters which we possess is one written during his first sojourn in Paris to thank M. de St Jeoire for calling upon him.

Having climbed the hill and reached the gates of the castle, the Provost asked the corporal of the guard for an interview with the governor as an envoy of his most Serene Highness the Duke of Savoy, at the same time giving his own name and that of his companion. The baron hastened down to receive them at the guard-house, and greeted them with every sign of respect and affection. Francis handed to him the three letters of which he was the bearer: that of the Duke, commanding the Governor to receive, protect and treat with every regard the priests who should be sent by the Bishop of Geneva to work for the conversion of the province; that of the Bishop who appointed the two De Sales as his deputies and who added his prayers to the orders of the Duke; and finally that of M. de Boisy, who begged the baron that for the sake of their ancient friendship he would be kind enough to take every care of both son and nephew.* On reading these letters the Governor, rejoicing in the thought of a Catholic restoration in Chablais, welcomed his visitors with still further marks of friendship and consideration: he took them within to his own quarters, ordered a meal to be placed before them, and entertained them to the best of his power. Knowing, however, that they had had a long and arduous day, he did not keep them too long from that rest of which they stood in great need: but, putting off a full discussion of their affairs till the next day, he conducted his guests to the sleeping quarters which had been prepared for them.

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* C. A. de S., l. ii, p. 95.

On the morrow they said Mass in the chapel of the castle, serving each other in turns. Then, after breaking their fast, they were conducted round the castle by M. de St Jeoire. As they passed along the battlements, the Governor pointed to the cannons that formed the defence of the fortress and represented the Duke's power over the reconquered territory. "We shall have no further need," he remarked, "for all these guns, if only it please God that the Huguenots yonder be willing to hear you." The baron was anxious to show his guests the magnificent view that could be seen from this height in the direction of the lake of Geneva, but the eyes of the missionary were turned towards another quarter, and his mind occupied with thoughts far distant from that of the beauty of the scenery. Gazing sadly over the plain of Chablais, he noticed the various signs of the troubles through which the country had passed, the ruins of churches and presbyteries, gibbets rising by the side of the roads in place of the ancient crosses, the gutted remains of Catholic châteaux, the tottering remnants of dismantled towers—ruin and devastation everywhere as the external mark of a spiritual desolation that was far more heartrending and sadder to the eyes of faith than even these gloomy signs of the ravages of religious war. As he leant over the parapet, thinking of the significance of what he saw, the tears rose to his eyes, and his thoughts went back to the lamentations of the ancient prophets. "See how, indeed, the Lord has taken away the hedge of his vineyard and broken down the wall thereof: it is wasted and trodden down and desolate. The earth is infected by the inhabitants thereof: because they have trans-

* C. A. de S., l. ii, p. 96.

gressed the laws, they have changed the ordinance, they have broken the everlasting covenant (Isa. v and xxiv). The ways of Sion mourn because there are none who come to the solemn feast . . . the enemy hath put out his hand to all her desirable things . . . the Law is no more and her prophets have found no vision from the Lord . . . great as the sea is thy desolation. . . . O Chablais, O Geneva, turn ye back and be converted to the Lord your God." "Let us hope in the goodness of our Lord," he went on to say to his cousin, "and fortify ourselves in his strength, so that, poor servants that we are, we may nevertheless gather together the scattered stones of his sanctuary and rebuild his altars." Towards this work of restoration, therefore, Francis immediately turned his thoughts, and entered upon a conference with Baron d'Hermance and Louis de Sales as to the most practical method of carrying out their mission. The baron, who was a man of experience and wisdom, promised to help them to the full extent of his power, but recommended that for the present they should act with the greatest prudence and moderation. He considered that it was not advisable for them to say Mass either at Thonon or any other place in the possession of the Calvinists, since even at night there was no sure place of safety for them except within the fortress. They might, however, find means, he said, of preaching in Thonon. Should they be prevented by time and circumstances from celebrating Mass in the castle, they might do so in the chapel of the Hospitallers of Mont-Jou, on the shores of the lake, but in that case they would have to repair the building to some extent. Or again, they might go for this purpose to the village of Marin, beyond the Drance; for all the territory between the Drance and the country of Valais, having been occupied by the Catholic Valaisians, had never lost the faith. But above all, until they saw how things would turn and were able to make other arrangements, they must most certainly spend the night-time within the security of the castle. Seeing the wisdom of this advice, the missionaries decided to do as the baron suggested, and gladly accepted the use of a room at Allinges, which for the moment they intended to employ as their headquarters.

On the next day, September 16, they set out on their first visit to Thonon, which lay about a league and a half from the castle. When they reached the town they went to the house of Claude Marin, the Duke's procurator-fiscal, a good Catholic, upon whose integrity and prudence they could place full reliance. He told them that, except for the Duke's officials who were all Catholics, there were in Thonon but seven families, totalling about fifteen individuals, who were of the old faith, that these were for the most part strangers who had come into the town for the purpose of trade, and that even in their case the fear of persecution hindered them from openly declaring their religion. Francis sent for them at once. When they were all gathered together in the fiscal's house, the Provost told them that he had come into the town to be their pastor, and with their help he would do his best to fulfil his duties towards them: in the meantime they must bear strongly in mind their obligation not to be ashamed of their faith, remembering that Jesus Christ would only recognize as his disciples in the presence of his Father those who had recognized him for their master in the presence of men. He ended by telling them that henceforward their place of assembly would be the church of St Hippolytus, a building which had been declared open to both Catholics and Protestants, in order that the two religions might hold their services there in alternation. The little flock of Catholics had experienced a great joy when they had learnt of the arrival of the missionaries, and now the words of their new priest made a still further impression upon them. They engaged themselves to attend the services given by the Provost in the church of St Hippolytus, and promised not to allow themselves to be kept from so doing, either by fear of the Calvinists or by human respect. The next call was of an entirely different kind and, whilst doubtless conducted in the most formal manner, must have been full of hidden tension and a certain amount of foreboding on one side and the other. This was an official visit to the Syndics of the town, Pierre Fournier and Henri Jaudet, who represented the strong Calvinistic influence then paramount in the locality. The missionaries handed to these officials the Duke's letters authorizing their presence and functions in Thonon, and then, leaving the worthy burghers to digest the full significance of this procedure as best they could, made their way home to the castle of Allinges.

The actual opening of spiritual hostilities, indicated by the delivery of this kind of cartel, began on Sunday, September 18. On this day Francis and his adherents made their way to the church of St Hippolytus, and, as soon as the service and the preaching of the Protestant minister were ended, entered the building. The Provost, going up into the pulpit, lost no time in declaring the meaning of his presence, but delivered a controversial sermon, demonstrating to his audience that no one has the right to preach or to be listened to unless he has received from lawful authority the mission to announce the word of God. He went on to explain the two sorts of mission, the ordinary, received from God's recognized representatives upon earth, or the extraordinary, as inspired directly by Almighty God and for the most part approved by the working of miracles; he showed from the examples of St John the Baptist and St Paul that even when there is evidence of the latter mission, it can only be exercised with reference to the former. To which of these missions could Calvin point? The conclusion was devoted to proving that the Church of

Rome alone possessed the power of sending out preachers, and that to these preachers all were bound to hearken, unless they wished to stand before God in the same condemnation as the pagans and sinners.

It was not long before this initiation of the Catholic apostleship aroused violent opposition on the part of the Huguenots. As soon as the news of the Provost's arrival had spread through the town, the Calvinist ministers had been filled with sentiments of irritation and anxiety. The first public preaching of the old faith fanned this resentment into open anger, and the pastors set to work to organize a counter-movement with all the means in their power. The first of these was a policy of acrid calumny against the two Canons, for whom no epithet seemed too vile or exaggerated. The Provost and his companion were represented to the people as disturbers of the public peace, hypocritical seducers, false prophets, idolaters, wizards, and magicians. We learn that the Saint's very piety was later on the cause of one of these accusations; for when in after days he took up his abode in Thonon, and it became known that he spent long hours of the night in meditation or reading of one sort or another, these devotions of the Saint were travestied as the study and working out of magical incantations.* As was only to be expected, this outpouring of insults and slander succeeded in inspiring the inhabitants of Thonon with the deepest distrust of the two priests, and even the more moderate among the Protestants considered it at least prudent to avoid any kind of communication with persons thus anathematized by the ministers. These ministers eventually persuaded a number of the principal burghers of the town to bind themselves under oath never to listen to the missionaries, and a public ordinance was promulgated, forbidding all Calvinists to attend the Roman services and sermons. These measures were so successful that for a time the Provost and his companion could find no other scope for their energies but the little band of Catholics whom we have already mentioned.

But the trouble was more than local. The Genevan Government had quickly learnt, doubtless through its efficient spies, that the Duke of Savoy intended to send missionaries into Chablais. The ministers of Geneva gathered together in council, and, according to popular rumour, passed resolutions declaring that the Duke by the despatch of these missionaries had violated the rights of the inhabitants of Chablais and broken the conditions of the treaty; that these Papists ought to be driven forth with whips; and that it was perfectly lawful for anyone to kill them by any means available. It was even asserted that certain persons had engaged themselves by oath to carry out this policy of murder. The calumnies at Thonon and the rumour of threats from Geneva had no effect upon the courage and determina-

* Dep. Marin

tion of the Provost. "Now is the time, cousin," he said to Louis de Sales, "to keep up our courage, and, provided that you are not afraid, you will see that we shall achieve success." Louis protested that he experienced not the slightest feeling of fear. "Very well, then," rejoined Francis, "we are as strong as needs be." When several persons were expressing their astonishment at the fury of the ministers of Chablais, the Provost answered: "Put yourselves in their place. If you were hungry, would not the man who took the bread out of your mouth make you cry out? They can hardly look with pleasure at these efforts of mine, which, in case of success, will send them a-begging. Let us pray to God for them, and let us give them still more reason to shout. We might say with the Emperor Tiberias—*Satis est nobis si tantum dicant.* It is sufficient for us if they only talk."*

That there was some real foundation, however, for these rumours of murder and danger is made quite evident, apart from what afterwards happened to Francis, by the immediate action of his father. As early as September 17 M. de Boisy had received news of what had occurred at Geneva, and early in the morning of the next day—that is to say, on the very Sunday when Francis was to preach for the first time in the church of St Hippolytus—the anxious father despatched Georges Rolland with a horse to bring his son back from the sphere of danger. But the Provost, firm in his resolution, refused to take advantage of this move, and contented himself with sending back Louis de Sales for a few days, in order that his cousin might allay the fears of the anxious father and mother. Left thus to continue his mission alone, without companion, servant or resources, he found an indescribable comfort in the thought that his only hope now certainly lay in the power of God, that there were no human means to help, and that his sole defence must be derived from the divine protection. In these things he perceived a sure augury of ultimate success.

In the meanwhile another person had been experiencing a similar anxiety to that of M. de Boisy. This was the Provost's great friend, Antoine Favre. Having been obliged to go to the valley of Aulps on business, he went down on September 20 to the château of Marclaz, about twenty miles from Thonon, and here he was able to arrange an interview with Francis de Sales. Reassured by what he learnt from Francis, and also by news given to him by friends in the neighbourhood of Thonon, he decided to call at the château of Sales on his return to Chambéry, for the purpose of communicating his own assurance to M. de Boisy. That he succeeded in doing so is not likely. On the other hand, he continued to show the greatest interest in the labours of his friend, and often encouraged him by his affectionate letters. In addition to this, fearing that the Bishop might be persuaded by M. de Boisy to recall Francis de Sales from Chablais, he advised Mgr. de Granier to leave the taking of any such decision to the Provost himself. What encouragement Francis derived from the friendship of Antoine Favre and how valiantly his courage had to fight against the gloomy prospect that lay ahead may be seen from the following extract from one of his letters to the Senator.

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* Pérennès (l. ii, chap. vi, p. 157), quoting De Cambis, p. 152, and De Longueterre, Part IV, p. 158.

". . . No other thought gives me such delightful recreation as that by which I daily strive to picture you to myself as vividly as possible. For then truly it seems that a light shines out upon me in the midst of densest darkness; and oh! my friend, how gloomy for me indeed is this atmosphere, ruled as it certainly is by the prince of that darkness of which you speak! For since your departure he has not ceased to darken more and more the minds of these people. The Governor, with several other Catholics, has made continual efforts to attract the country people and the citizens of Evian by secret persuasions to our sermons, and has striven to promote the affairs of our religion with judgement and zeal. All this the demon perceived at once. For the chief men of Thonon, having called together a council, took with the most insidious purpose an oath that neither themselves nor the rest of the people should ever attend any of the Catholic sermons; nor was the individual obstinacy of each sufficient in itself, but that by a wickedly concerted action towards their own ruin they must needs set at nought the will of the Prince and our own efforts, and with a kind of frenzied obstinacy must band together to oppose us. This took place, so I hear, in the town hall, after they had already gone aside into *the council of the wicked*, that is to say, when, on the pretext of annulling some marriage or other according to their custom, they had assembled in what they call their consistory, and had already resolved upon this thing amongst themselves.

"What can be done, brother? *Their heart is hardened. They have said to God: 'We will not serve. Depart from us; we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.' They will not hearken* to us *because they will not hearken* to God. But I think I see the object which these miserable men have in view: doubtless, by depriving us of all hope of effecting anything definite, they desire to force us one way or the other to take our departure. But we, on our part, have no such intention. So long as opportunity is given to us by the present truce and by the will of our ecclesiastical and secular chiefs, we are thoroughly and most firmly determined to carry on the work, to leave no stone unturned, *to entreat, to rebuke in all patience and doctrine*, according to the measure that God has given to us.

"Moreover, it is my opinion that, if anyone wishes to carry on this contest effectively, not only is there need of sermons, but above all the holy Sacrifice must be restored as soon as possible, in order that the enemy may realize that, so far from discouraging us by his tactics, he is only thereby making us the more determined. Nevertheless, I see that in this matter great prudence is required, as so much, doubtless, depends on the ultimate permanency of the present temporary peace."*

In a letter written probably about the same time or at the end of October, Francis reports to the Bishop " that the obstinacy of this people is so great that they have once more confirmed the public decree that no one should attend our Catholic preaching; and whereas we thought that several would come to us, either through curiosity or through some remnants of a taste for the ancient religion, we have only experienced their universal obduracy in the manner in which they have mutually exhorted each other against us. And they urge as excuse the evil treatment which they would receive from the Bernese and Genevans, who would treat them as deserters from their belief, if they were merely seen to come to us in any other manner than with insults in their mouths or with stones in their hands. It will be necessary for us not only to root out heresy, but before all else to eradicate the love of the world.

" In conversations amongst themselves the very ministers have confessed that we drew very good conclusions from the Holy Scriptures touching our faith, even with regard to the most august mystery of the altar; the others admit the same thing, and several would come to us, if they were not hindered by this inordinate fear of the world. But, my lord, we patiently hope that this *strong man* who *keepeth his court* will be driven out by a *stronger than he*, who is our Lord Jesus Christ.

" Such, then, is the state of our affairs."†

In the meanwhile Louis de Sales, having stayed a few days only with the Provost's parents, returned to Thonon and rejoined his fellow missionary in whatever work was possible. They did not restrict their efforts to the town, but went about amongst the villages of the neighbourhood, walking on foot, staff in hand. Often they would preach three or four times a day, and though they were without any sign of achieving success, they patiently persevered in the hope that God's grace would eventually fructify the seeds they were thus sowing. At times they would go together on their rounds, but not infrequently they would separate, each one taking the villages in a different direction. When they came together again, they would give each other an account of what had happened to them, taking especial note of any useful experience or of any sign of hope for the future, and consulting each other about difficult cases. Then with mutual exhortations and encouragements they would bid each other an affectionate farewell, to go forth once more upon their several ways. As time passed by, Louis developed a special taste for this work among the poor people of the country, and sometimes he would pass whole weeks thus occupied, without returning to see his companion.

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* E.N., Tom. XI, Lettre XXX, p. 90.

* E.N., Tom. XI, Lettre XXXV, p. 94.

It was this predilection of Louis de Sales, as well as the fact that Thonon itself was the main object of the whole work, which caused Francis to devote himself more and more to the town. Consequently, scarcely a day passed without his going thither from Allinges: neither rain, snow, frost, or storm could stop him. The winter of that year was particularly severe, and he sometimes suffered from the cold in an indescribable manner: yet never was there any complaint upon his lips, and he went about his duties without making the slightest allusion to the pain and hardship which were his lot. When the ice on the roads made the surface so dangerous that it became almost impossible to use them, the Provost had spikes or caulks fastened on to his boots in order to overcome the difficulty: where this expedient was of no avail, he would crawl along on his hands and knees. To add to his troubles, he was afflicted with a very severe form of chilblains both in his hands and feet, and the way along which he had passed was more than once marked by the blood that flowed from the gaping sores caused by this malady. Yet still he persevered in his daily journeyings and in the little he was able to do. He was not sanguine enough to expect any immediate result from his efforts. He knew the obstinacy of the leading Calvinists in the town and the hold which they possessed in many ways over the people. Even those who would have liked to listen to him dared not be seen doing so for the present. Therefore all that he aimed at was to break down prejudice, to show that the Catholic priest could be a man of courage, patience and devotion, to prove by his own example that the truest servants of the ancient faith were not like some of those who professed to defend its interest with the sword, but were full of charity and kindness even for those who were bitterly opposed to them. The ground had to be cleared and broken up before the seed could be sown, and it was a long way from that to the harvest. Above all, it was most necessary to strengthen his little band of Catholics, both for their own sakes and the sake of those around them. A Catholic layman, well-instructed and quietly consistent in the exercise of his religion, is often the best of apostles: and it was the aim of Francis to make his little flock worthy of becoming the nucleus of a great movement of conversion. Almost every day during Advent he gave conferences to these Catholics at Thonon, and in his anxiety that they should receive regular instruction and attention contrived to persuade priests of his acquaintance to take his place on Sundays and feast days, when he himself was hindered from being present. For though he made it his main work to labour in the town, he did not altogether abandon the country districts, but would make excursions into the neighbourhood, always on foot, with no other accessories but his Bible, his breviary and his beads.

One evening, when he was returning from one of these expeditions, accompanied by his cousin, they were caught in such torrents of rain that they were obliged to seek shelter beneath the eaves of an old barn, and were forced to pass the whole night with only this scant protection against the cold and wet. On another occasion the fall of darkness found them in a village where all the doors were already closed: though they sought shelter in cottage after cottage, they met with nought but a refusal of even the most meagre hospitality, so bitter was the feeling which the ministers had aroused against them. In order to protect themselves against the rigour of the cold, they were at length obliged to take refuge in the oven of the village bakery, which was still warm, and in this novel sleeping chamber they managed to pass the night. On another evening Francis was caught once more by the darkness, this time in a wood which was rendered dangerous to human life by the presence of wolves. Already he could hear the howls of these hungry marauders, as they roamed about in search of their prey. As the only hope of preserving his life, he climbed up into a tree, where he fastened himself to one of the branches with his sash, lest sleep, overtaking him, should cause him to fall. Snow lay upon the ground, and the cold was intense. When morning came, he was so numbed by exposure that he was unable to help himself in any way, and would assuredly have perished, had not the peasants of a neighbouring village, coming early into the forest, found him there in a terrible plight. Moved with pity by his sufferings, and overcoming their prejudice against him in their admiration at his courage, they carried him to their home, brought him back gently to life, and lavished every care upon him. Under the impulse of his gratitude, he seized the opportunity, in spite of his weakness, to speak to them of the true faith and of the necessity that all were under of abandoning heresy and joining once more the ancient church of Christ. Touched by his zeal and eloquence, the good folk listened to him with attention and sympathy, and though they were not immediately converted by his preaching, a seed was sown amongst them which afterwards produced an abundant harvest.

These dangers from the inclemency of the weather and the ferocity of wild beasts were not the only perils through which the Saint had to pass. More than one attempt was made upon his life by his own fellow human beings. It appears that a certain Protestant had promised to kill him and to carry his head either to Geneva or Berne.

On January 8, 1595, this man placed himself three times in a good position for carrying out his plan: three times he attempted to fire at the missionary, and each time the gun missed fire, in spite of the excellence of the weapon and of the persevering precautions which the would-be murderer took in order to attain his object. In despair at his own failure, he had recourse to the help of others, and posted several assassins at different places near which the Provost was to pass, so that if Francis escaped one assailant, he would certainly fall before another of the conspirators. But neither did these attempts succeed any better than the others: for whether God miraculously blinded these wretches, or gave to his servant the gift of invisibility, the fact remains that he passed by the places appointed without receiving any harm. This story will seem so improbable according to modern canons of credibility that it is well to mention that its truth was vouched for on oath by the very man who engineered the attempts at murder: for it so happened that this vehement persecutor afterwards became a Catholic, and gave sworn testimony to the above facts in the process of the Saint's beatification.

One might have thought that labours and sufferings as severe as those we have related might have stood in lieu of any system of penance. Such, however, was not the Provost's idea. He continued his usual austerities during his missionary work, and we have evidence that he practised mortification even beyond the limits of holy prudence: for we are told that Mgr. de Granier received such information as to the Saint's habits of fasting at this time that he felt himself obliged to intervene in the matter, to order the Provost to mitigate these penances, and to direct him to have more regard for his health.

About this time it would seem that Canon Louis de Sales was obliged to leave Chablais on account of the failure of his own personal resources. It might be wondered, indeed, how Francis himself managed to carry on his work in the face of a similar difficulty, and the explanation is partly to be found in the help which he derived from his mother. His father, indeed, obstinately refused to alter his resolution and to aid in any way the carrying out of a purpose of which he had shown such strong disapproval. But Mme. de Boisy refused to be bound by her husband's decision. Anxious to procure for her son all that was necessary in his work, she forwarded to him by means of a devoted servant a supply of linen, clothes, money and other necessities. We learn this from the Saint himself. "When I was preaching the faith in Chablais," he said one day to a Superioress of the Visitation, "I often had the greatest desire to work at something or other, in imitation of St Paul, and so to support myself with the labour of my hands; but being a stupid fellow, I was incapable of anything beyond a little mending to my clothes. It is true, nevertheless, that God granted me the grace not to be an expense to anybody in Chablais: when I had nothing more to live upon, my good mother would secretly send to me from Sales both linen and money." Nor did Mme. de Boisy confine her thoughtfulness to these material matters. Knowing what a consolation it would be to Francis to see his brother Louis, she arranged, unknown to her husband, that the two brothers should have several opportunities of meeting. Business matters which needed settling in some of the lands belonging to the house of Sales gave her the pretext for sending Louis into Chablais. It was in all probability due to her that, when Canon de Sales was obliged for a time to leave Francis alone in the midst of his troubles and dangers, M. de Boisy, anxious for the Provost's safety, was persuaded to send Georges Rolland to him, to be his attendant and companion. Henceforward this faithful servant followed his master through all his labours in Chablais, with all the more meritorious fidelity in that on more than one occasion his service was not unaccompanied by considerable anxiety and alarm. It is thanks to the testimony of Georges Rolland that we possess so many details about the Saint's life at this time.*

It must be confessed that the Provost's work was discouraging and seemed almost hopeless, and he had to endure innumerable rebuffs. When he went into the villages to preach, the people rejected his overtures, denied him entrance into their houses, and even refused to sell him food and drink. This was the result of the campaign of calumny against him: for the folk were afraid to have anything to do with a man who had been depicted to them in such dark colours. Yet he never lost courage. One day M. de Blonay, a fervent Catholic of Evian, who often used to receive the missionary at his château, strove to represent to him the hopelessness of trying to convert such obstinate people. "My dear brother," replied Francis, "I am only at the beginning of my work: I mean to continue it and to go on hoping in God in spite of all human probabilities."

And so the Saint continued to preach at Thonon and elsewhere with apostolic zeal. It might have been thought that such perseverance would speedily have had at least a slight measure of success: but, either from human respect or from fear of the ministers or from the prejudicial effects of the slanders against him, the Protestants would not come to his sermons. At length it was suggested to him that, as he could not reach the people with his voice, he might be able to do so by means of his pen, and he was advised to write a defence of the Catholic faith, composed with the particular object of combating the special errors of Calvinism. For a time he hesitated over this suggestion, neither rejecting nor accepting it, striving to weigh out its good points and its defects, and considering the means of making such a scheme effective. He then consulted his principal friends, from whom he received a unanimous judgement in favour of the idea. Not content with this, he meditated the matter before God and asked the Holy Spirit for light to see what he should do and strength to do it. At length, having one day experienced during the holy Sacrifice a strong impulse to adopt this plan of writing, he immediately set to work with his usual promptitude and energy. He began his task on January 7, 1595. It was not his intention to make a book of his apologia nor even a large-sized pamphlet: his many occupations utterly precluded such an idea. He had recourse to leaflets, written hurriedly in the few hours that he could spare from other work, and then multiplied as far as possible by the laborious process of copying. The leaflets, when finished, were distributed amongst certain families, in the hope that they would be read and passed on, or were at other times posted up in some public place, where all could read who would. From these scattered pieces, composed thus in odd moments of leisure during the space of some two years, and finally gathered into one, was formed the book of the *Controversies*, the first of the Saint's writings. St Francis himself never actually published the work, though he certainly had the intention of doing so, as we know from one of his letters. "The incomplete autograph from which the first edition was printed was discovered by chance thirty-six years after the Saint's death," writes Dom Mackey in an article in the *Dublin Review*. "It was sent to Pope Alexander VII (Chigi), after several exact copies had been taken. The *cahiers* were in disorder; there was no distinction of discourses or chapters. The name was given by the first editor, Léonard, who brought them out in 1672. Unfortunately, he took great liberties with the text, while professing only to soften a few expressions. Blaise brought out a second edition (1821), but was unable to obtain an authentic text, and has copied many of the errors of the first edition, besides adding notes of a Gallican character. The autograph above mentioned was discovered during the Vatican Council.

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* Pérennès, l. ii, chap. vii.

"This work then was not complete, and of course was not revised by its author. Much even of what he wrote is lost. Necessarily, therefore, it has gaps, and in some places the arguments are given only in outline. But in its plan and in the completed parts it is a masterpiece. The influence of Bellarmine is considerable and apparent, but in no way destroys the independence of the Saint's work. His capacious memory adds from its own stores; his vigorous intellect, his fervid imagination, adapt, apply, illustrate, drive home the arguments; the luminous order, the expressive language, are all his own."*

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* *Four Essays on the Life and Writings of St Francis de Sales*, by the Rev. H. B. Mackey, O.S.B. Reprinted by Burns and Oates from the *Dublin Review*.

"If we consider it," says Hamon, speaking of the *Controversies*, "not as it was disfigured by its first editor, who, in trying to improve it, made it unrecognizable, but such as we find it in the new edition of the holy Doctor's works, we shall see that it is of inestimable value, that it presents the proofs of the Catholic faith with irresistible force, and that the Commissioners of Canonization in 1658 could truly say that St Athanasius, St Ambrose and St Augustine had done no better work in support and defence of the true faith."

The reasons for which the Provost wrote his work and the spirit in which he laboured at it are so well described in his *Epistle to the Gentlemen of Thonon* that we think it well to give it here in great part.

"Having been engaged in preaching the Word of God for a considerable time in your town, and having only been listened to by your people rarely, intermittently and in secret, I have set myself to work, desirous as I am of leaving nothing undone on my part, to put down in writing certain of the principal arguments in defence of the Church's faith: these I have chosen for the most part from the sermons and treatises that I have already delivered in your town. I would, indeed, have preferred to have been heard, just as my accusers have been, for words uttered by the lips have life, while those on paper are but dead. . . . It would have been best for me, therefore, had I been heard; but in default of that, these writings will not be without certain advantages.

"(1) It will carry to you what you are unwilling to come and take amongst us in our assemblies. (2) It will satisfy those who, as sole answer to the arguments which I adduce, say that they would very much like to see them placed before some minister, and seem to think, in saying this, that the mere presence of the adversary would make these reasonings stagger, shiver, and lose colour and countenance. Well, now it is in their power to take my arguments and place them before the pastors. (3) A writing lends itself more easily to being well digested, it gives more time for thought than does the voice, and by its means one can devote oneself to a deeper and more thorough consideration of the subject. (4) It will be seen that, if I disown therein the thousand impieties ascribed to Catholics, it is not in order to wriggle out of the contest, as some have asserted, but in order to follow out the holy intention of the Church: since, by committing my word to writing, I place it in full view of everybody, and expose it to the censure of my superiors. Therein, I am sure, these will find much ignorance but, with God's help, nothing that is irreligious or contrary to the declarations of the Roman Church.

"Nevertheless, I must protest, for the relief of my conscience, that all these reasons had never of themselves determined me to write: for writing is an art in itself, possessed only by the most learned and cultured intellects. One must be talented indeed in order to write well: more moderate minds should content themselves with speaking, in which method gesture, voice, and feature lend illumination to the spoken word. My talent, which is of the slightest or, at the very highest estimate, is on the lowest steps of the very ordinary, cannot possibly succeed in this employ. Nor, indeed, had I ever thought of such a work, unless a grave and judicious nobleman had not incited me to it and given me the necessary courage. To which may be added that this undertaking has since met with the approval of several of my principal friends, whose opinion I value so much that my own has no weight at all with me. Only when deprived of all other counsel, do I set any store on my own judgement.

"I have, then, set out here a few of the principal arguments for the Catholic faith. . . . I present them to you with a good heart, hoping that the reasons which prevented you from listening to me will not have the power to hinder you from reading this work; let me assure you, moreover, that you will never have beneath your eyes a writing from the pen of a man more devoted to your spiritual service than am I. . . ."

At the end of his Preface to the intended leaflets he writes as follows: "I beg of you, gentlemen of Thonon, to take this work of mine in good part, and although you have seen many others better done and richer, make it for a short time the object of your study, and possibly you will find it more to your taste then these: for it is purely Savoyard in its atmosphere, and amongst the most profitable prescriptions and most recent remedies is the recommendation to return to one's native air. If this be of no profit to you we will show you others purer and more subtle."

In reviewing the work as a whole we prefer once more to seek the assistance of Dom Mackey, and to quote almost in full the résumé he gave of the *Controversies* in his article in the *Dublin Review*.

"It is divided into three parts. The treatise on Purgatory is wrongly called a fourth part. We see clearly from the Saint's own words that it is only a section of the third part. The first is on the want of mission in the heretical ministers; the second treats of the rules of faith, and shows how the ministers violated them; the third proves that the Catholic doctrine agrees with these rules.

"His first part, then, which forms one-fifth of the whole, is devoted o prove the grand and fundamental truth that, as the new teachers were never *sent*, they had no right to preach, and the people had no ight to listen to them. He first proves by a complete induction hat they were sent by no visible authority, and then overthrows heir hypothesis of a defectible and invisible Church.

"The second part, on the Rules of Faith, forms more than threefths of the work as we have it. A magnificent introduction, which s a treatise in itself, gives the eight divisions of this part. The argument, stated as far as possible in the Saint's own words, is as follows: Catholics and Protestants agree that the Rule of Faith is the Word of God. But this does not tell us what God's Word *says*, or means. And so we require a rule which applies, proposes, interprets the fundamental and formal rule. This second rule is the Church of God. God guides our faith by his own Word, but he uses the Church as his herald or interpreter. 'Let us say, if it may be permitted, that God is the painter, our faith the canvas, God's Word the colours, and the Church the brush.' These are the two main rules, which are subdivided thus: The Word of God is contained in Scripture, or tradition. The Church speaks through its 'whole body' by the general belief of the faithful; through its 'nobler part,' that is, in its pastors and teachers, either united in actual 'council' or united in 'consent of faith,' though separated in time and place; finally, through its 'supreme head,' the prime minister of Jesus Christ. These six are the ordinary rules. There is also the extraordinary sign of miracles and the negative test from the harmony of faith and reason.

"Here, then, are eight good rules of faith: Scripture, tradition, the Church, councils, Fathers, the Pope, miracles, natural reason. The two first are the formal rule, the four next are rules of application, the seventh is extraordinary, and the eighth negative. Or, if it were desired to reduce all these to one, it might correctly be said: The sole and true rule of faith to believe unto salvation is the Word of God, preached and declared by the Church of God.

"In the rest of this second part he proves that each of these is a true rule, and then shows how the ministers have violated it.

"With regard to the Holy Scripture their admission is proof enough that it is a rule of faith, but here he shows that they have not only not followed the rule, but have begun by making a false one—a false Scripture. He gives most striking instances of the way in which they have corrupted the integrity of the Sacred Word by rejecting whole books, by rejecting parts of the books they received, by corrupting the text, and by interpreting the whole after their own fancy and passions. The general course of his argument contains important passages on such collateral subjects as the propriety of using a dead language for an authoritative book, and for a Church universal in time and place. On the Canon of Scripture, he reminds his readers that, of course, the Church does not claim to make a book canonical, but only declares it to be so. 'And if ever our Redeemer defends his Church against the gates of hell, if ever the Holy Spirit inspires it and leads it, it must be here, for if he were to leave it in this case whereon our religion chiefly depends, it would be to abandon it altogether' (Discourse XX).

"Little remains of his teaching on the second rule, tradition; enough, however, to destroy the whole ground of heretical objection. He shows that Catholics in no sense teach 'doctrines and traditions of men,' because Catholic tradition is the very word of Christ and the Apostles, written, not on paper, but on the pure and living hearts of the faithful.

"After the formal rules we come to the rules of application; and, following rather St Francis's order than that of his editors, which is in much of this second part rather defective and confused, we take next the authority of the Church. This is the real question. Not, as the ministers pretend, whether or no Scripture is the rule of faith, but whether God has left the interpretation of Scripture to individual judgement, or to the whole Church, as the organ of the Holy Spirit. He shows that private judgement is, of its very nature, incompetent to be a principle of unity, a rule of faith, and that as a fact private judgements differ on the briefest and simplest propositions of Scripture—such as 'Thou art Peter,' 'This is my body.' He points out to the deluded people that this private judgement, of which their teachers make such a parade, is a mere word, a mere cloak, under cover of which they force their own interpretation. 'And why,' he asks indignantly, 'should I follow the judgement of another, why rather of one than another? Let him talk as he likes of analogy and enthusiasm, of "the Lord" and "the Spirit"—all this cannot so carry me away as to make me, if I must embark at hazard, not choose rather to embark in the vessel of my own judgement, than in another's, let him talk Greek, Hebrew, Latin, Tartar, Moorish, or what you will.' And he tears to pieces their miserable profession of interpreting Scripture by Scripture, and the whole by the analogy of faith and the creed. 'The simple people, when they hear talk of "the analogy of faith," suppose this to be some word of most secret mystery and cabalistic power; they admire every interpretation wherein this word is thrust forward.' As if Catholics interpreted Scripture in any other way than by the true analogy of the faith. 'We have been doing so this 1,500 years.' And he compares the two methods. Let the question be, whether Christ is truly present in the blessed Sacrament. Catholics appeal with simplicity to the Scripture: 'No word is impossible with God:' and to the Creed: 'I believe in God the Father Almighty.' But the ministers, before they apply what they call their rule, a truly Lesbian rule, adapt it to their own designs. Professing to appeal to these texts, they gloss them first, and foist into them a proposition of their own—that Christ, being in heaven, cannot also be on earth. He closes this section with a noble protest against their unreasonableness and hypocrisy, and specially against their tyranny in forcing their interpretations on their co-religionists. 'Good God! the doctrine of Nice, after 1,300 years of approbation, is submitted to the tests of Luther, of Calvin, of Beza, and nobody is to test the truth of the Calvinistic doctrine, entirely new, all blear-eyed, patched up, and inconsistent!' He shows clearly, in other chapters, the marks and characters of the true Church—that it must be visible, one, holy, fertile, ancient, spiritual, apostolic, universal: but we have given enough to show the drift and character of his argument and style. This part on the Church is lengthy and full. Unfortunately, one or two sections are entirely wanting. It is grievous to find, for instance, a blank page under the title 'Apostolic.'

"The next two rules—Fathers and Councils—are treated in two short chapters in the published editions, but are largely supplemented by the extracts in the *Processus*.

"We must delay a little longer on the most important sixth rule, the Pope. This is very fully treated, and indeed, with the addition of what is contained in the *Processus*, forms quite a fifth part of the whole work. No Doctor of the Church has so explicitly and conclusively treated this question. The Saint takes all the texts on the prerogatives of St Peter, and scrutinizes them one by one, developing their meaning, and answering all objections against them. He shows that the powers of Peter were to be, and actually were, transmitted to a line of successors, and that these are the Bishops of Rome. In the specially historical part there are a few mistakes, natural to the age in which he lived, but they nowhere affect the substance of his argument; his knowledge of history is most extensive, and for his age critical. He fully explains the infallibility and the conditions required for its proper exercise; and again and again he explicitly asserts the doctrine, as a matter of absolute certainty, taken for granted among Catholics. Where he shines most grandly is in his manipulation of the Scripture proof, and its connection with reason. For instance, in showing that the headship of Peter proves the headship of his successors, because it was not personal to him, but official, and a part of the very constitution of the Church, he says:

"'I have strictly proved, so far, that the Catholic Church was a monarchy in which a chief minister (of Christ) governed all the rest. So not only was St Peter the head, but as the Church did not fail on his death, the authority of a head did not fail; otherwise the Church would have ceased to be one, and would no longer be as its founder made it. And truly, all the reasons for which our Lord placed a head in this body, did not so urgently require it in that beginning, when the Apostles who governed the Church were holy, humble, charitable, lovers of unity and concord, as in the progress and continuation, when charity has grown cold, every one loves himself, nobody will listen to the words of another, or submits to discipline.

"'I pray you, if the Apostles, whose minds were so immediately enlightened by the Holy Spirit, who were so steady and so strong, had need of a Confirmer and Pastor, as the form of their union, how much greater is the need now, when there is so much infirmity and weakness in the members of the Church.'

"On the seventh rule he shows that miracles, in which he includes prophecy, although they are in themselves extraordinary, and although the Church is independent of them, still are a proper note of the Church. He has some curious remarks on the attempts of Protestants, in spite of their principles, to show the occurrence of miracles among themselves. He appeals to the very important and significant fact of the great increase of miracles in the time of St Augustine, after the Gospel had been fully preached, with their continuance to our own time, to show that it is not a chance single miracle, but 'the perpetual and ordinary sequence of miracles which is a mark of the true Church.'

"Taking the eighth rule, he shows, on the one hand, the utter absurdity of many of the heretical opinions; on the other, the reasonableness and beauty of Catholic doctrines. Our space will not allow quotation; but here more than anywhere shines the persuasiveness, and, to use his own word, the *affectiveness* of his style.

"Of the third part of the 'Controversies' we have, alas! but a few fragments. The treatises promised on Penance, the blessed Eucharist, Matrimony, etc., were either not written or have been lost. There are a few pages on the sacraments in general, on their form, and on the intention of their minister. And there is a short but very complete treatise on Purgatory, which closes the work. The introduction to this part contains one of his finest passages. Every word is a trumpet-note of victory. He appeals to the people against their minister.

"'And I bring you to this: the ministers wish to fight us with Scripture alone—I consent; they will have only the part of Scripture they please—I agree; and at the end I say that the belief of the Catholic Church is superior in every point, because it has more passages for its belief, and they are more clear, more pure, more simple, more reasonable, and better interpreted. . . . And I beseech you, when you shall have seen me engage, and at last conquer the enemy, with Scripture alone, that *then* you would represent to yourselves our superabundance of right, by that great and honourable succession of martyrs, priests and doctors, who have testified by their doctrine and at the price of their blood, that the faith we fight for, under their banners, is the holy, the pure, and the Apostolic—and this will be an over-measure of victory.'"

Among the labours which the Provost undertook about this time was the difficult task of introducing a more Christian spirit among the soldiers of the garrison of Allinges. He had already gained the admiration of the men by the courage and endurance he showed in his missionary work, and had made them his friends by his kindness and affability. They treated him with every respect, and delighted to accompany him on the way to Thonon whenever their duty or pleasure took them in that direction. His friendship, however, did not blind him to their faults, nor was his courage of the sort to pass over in silence that which was wrong. He set himself, therefore, to correct their faults, the first and most apparent of which was their universal habit of cursing and profanity. At all times, whether at work or recreation, they interlarded their conversation with all manner of oaths, of which the greater number were not merely coarse but entailed the taking of God's name in vain and the use of expressions which were hideously profane. As the men did not always show themselves amenable to correction, and as he had made up his mind to stamp out the practice, he had recourse to the Governor, and persuaded him to inflict penalties upon all those who should swear or use irreverently the name of God, our Lady or the saints. Another great abuse was the usage of duelling. On the slightest pretext of imagined offence, challenges were issued, often with fatal results. The Duke of Savoy had, indeed, decreed heavy penalties against the custom: but this only applied to the soldiers when they were actually on service; the method by which the combatants evaded this regulation was to ask for leave of absence, and then, meeting at some spot in the neighbourhood, carry out their purpose as if no law existed to prevent them. Francis argued and inveighed against the evil in vain: custom and the fear of being branded as cowards were too much for the men to whom he spoke. Many were willing to obey, but they wanted a lead from someone of their own class. Once more, therefore, the Provost had recourse to authority, and seeking an interview with the Governor, fearlessly laid the scandal before him in its true terms. "Sir," he said to the baron, "how long are you going to permit this abuse? You are not in any way allowed to grant the men this leave of absence, because by this very proceeding you give them liberty to fight, and you are aware that duelling is not allowed. This fury to kill can only come from a more than brutal spirit. It is forbidden by the Prince's edict, and you cannot find a single law in favour of such madness. But the chief consideration is that it grievously offends almighty God. Therefore it is your duty not to abuse but to use the authority given to you, so as to forbid in the most absolute terms these appeals to the sword. Alas! why is it that these unhappy men will send their souls to hell for the slightest thing? Why do they not keep the points of their swords to maintain, with the risk of a glorious death, the rights of their country, their Prince and their religion?"*

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* C. A. de S., l. ii, p. 100.

This vigorous appeal had the desired effect of persuading the Governor to alter his policy: in the future no further leave was granted for the purpose of duelling, and the Prince's edict was strictly maintained amongst the garrison.

At the beginning of Lent, which opened on February 8, Francis determined to take up his headquarters at Thonon. This he considered to be necessary for the sake of his little band of Catholics, who were probably exposed to greater persecution than formerly on account of their relations with himself. Moreover, he was aware that a certain number of Protestants desired to communicate with him, and that such communication would be rendered easier by his presence in the town at night, when people could approach him with greater security under cover of the darkness. Francis, therefore, took up his abode at Thonon in the house of a relative and family friend, an elderly lady, named Mme. du Foug, the widow of a man who had been Procurator-General of Chablais. Already on several occasions the Provost had taken advantage of her hospitality during his daily visits to Thonon, when he found himself in need of a retreat for the purpose of study and prayer. With regard to his daily Mass, he had decided to make use of the chapel of St Stephen, a building which was situated beyond the Drance. Mme. du Foug was delighted that he should make her house his home, and treated him as her son, which name she often gave him, while he on his part reciprocated with the title of mother. The Catholics of Thonon were equally rejoiced at his presence amongst them. "We need no longer fear the fury of the wolves," they said, "since our good pastor is with us to watch over our defence."

CHAPTER VIII *

(1595–1596)

Francis escapes assassination—His father's alarm—Labours at Thonon and Allinges—Conversion of Pierre Poncet—Francis visits Sales and Annecy—Obtains benefice of Corsier Anières—Spiritual favour—Pilgrimage to the Voirons—Beginning of reaction towards Catholicism—Renewed labours and difficulties—Another escape from assassination—Death of Baron d'Hermance—The Duke begins to show interest in Chablais—Francis preaches in the public square at Thonon—Ministers meet in conclave, but refuse public disputation—Religious dialogue in St Hippolytus'—Conversion of Baron d'Avully—Francis disputes with La Faye in Geneva—He is called to Turin by the Duke—Plans for the conversion of Chablais—He returns to Thonon

INSTALLED thus at Thonon, Francis set himself to the work of fulfilling his pastoral duties with all the zeal that the new arrangement made possible for him. He preached almost every day; he was ready to hear the confessions of those who came to him at any time; he visited the poor and sick, taking note of their needs, and consoling the afflicted with words of charity and compassion. Though his means were small, he managed by economy to save a little money for the poor, and when his generosity had exhausted this supply, he had recourse to his mother, who would send him all that she could spare.

It was only to be expected that the Provost's daring policy of living in Thonon would exasperate the Protestant party and lay him open to acts of violence. His own people warned him of the danger which he ran, without, however, deterring him from his purpose. It was not long before he received indisputable evidence of the active hatred of his enemies and of their intention to proceed even to the most violent measures. One evening he found himself obliged to go back to the castle of Allinges, in order to get some papers of which he had need, and he accordingly set out from Thonon, accompanied by Georges Rolland and two other Catholics. When they had gone a certain part of the distance, there suddenly sprang out upon them a couple of armed men, who advanced in their direction brandishing swords and uttering the most horrible threats against the Provost. Rolland and the two Catholics, drawing their weapons, flung themselves in front of their master to defend him: but Francis, pushing his way through them, called upon them to desist. "Sheathe your swords and stand aside," he said. "It is for me to go and meet those who seek my life." And he advanced boldly towards his opponents. Astounded by his daring, they hesitated. Gazing in open astonishment, they were struck by the calm courage and dignity of his bearing, and when he went on to speak to them were still further amazed at the gentleness of the words in which he asked them their purpose and expostulated with them on the wickedness of their design. In a short time they were completely mastered by his courage and eloquence, the weapons dropped from their hands, and, deeply ashamed of the purpose for which they had come, they fell on their knees before the Saint, asking his pardon and throwing the blame of their crime upon the influence of their ministers. They then protested that henceforth not only would they never attack or oppose him again, but would render him every service that was in their power.*

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* Hamon, l. iii, chapter iii.

As soon as Francis and his companions arrived at the castle, Georges Rolland, full of fear at the danger which his master had just escaped, sought out the Governor, and told him all that had happened. The latter, alarmed in his turn, came to the Saint and begged him for the sake of his safety to accept an escort of soldiers, who would protect him in his journeys. But Francis would have none of it. "I desire no longer term to my life than what God has fore-ordained," he said. "I have no need of the protection of soldiers. St Paul and the other Apostles of the Saviour of the world, using only the weapon of God's word, broke down the power of bows, shield, sword, and war. Luther and Calvin, indeed, have planted their perfidies by force of arms, but these must be eradicated and destroyed by the word alone, so that by the voice of the Lord shall the cedars be broken and the desert of Cades be made to tremble. In any case, to endure death in upholding the sincerity of the Catholic Faith would be for me the most glorious of fates."†

The Governor, at a loss for a reply, insisted no further, but kept his own counsel. Pledged as he was by duty and promise to protect the Provost, he quietly took means to surround him with what protection was possible. He appointed several soldiers to the duty of watching unostentatiously over the safety of the missionary; they were to follow him at a distance when he went to Thonon or to any other part of Chablais, and were to return in front of him in the evening. These measures, however, were not sufficient for Georges Rolland: in his anxiety for the safety of his master, he wrote to M. de Boisy and told him what had happened. The old nobleman, more than ever convinced of the justice of his views, and still further alarmed at this news, sent a messenger post-haste to Thonon, bidding his son in the most stringent terms to return home at once. Francis answered by the same courier as follows:

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* Deposition of François Favre. C. A. de S., l. ii, p. 104.

† C. A. de S., l. ii, p. 104.

"My honoured and dear Father,

"If Rolland had been your son instead of being merely your servant, he would not have been so cowardly as to recoil from an encounter so insignificant as the one that befell us, and he would not exaggerate it into a great battle. Nobody can doubt the ill-will of our adversaries, but, on the other hand, people are doing us a great wrong if they doubt our courage. By the grace of God we know that *he that shall persevere unto the end, he shall be saved*, and that *he that striveth for the mastery is not crowned except he strive lawfully*, and that *that which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory.*

"I beg of you, therefore, my father, not to ascribe my perseverance to a spirit of disobedience, but to look upon me always as

"Your very respectful son, etc."*

His father, however, insisted, and wrote to him to the following effect: "I have nought but praise for your zeal, but it can result in no good. Persons of the soundest judgement are openly saying that your perseverance is nothing but blind obstinacy, and that you are tempting God by prolonging any further this trial of your strength. These people of Thonon will never submit to receive the Faith except at the mouth of the cannon. I conjure you, therefore, to put a speedy end to our anxieties and alarms, and to return to your family which ardently desires you, especially to your mother, who is dying with grief at the fear of losing you. If my *prayers* are not sufficient, then as your father I send you my *orders* to return at once."†

However much he may have been moved by this appeal, Francis persisted in remaining at Thonon. He placed obedience to his mission above that which he owed to his father, and consequently felt obliged to write to him as follows: "In spite of the respect which I have for your orders, I find myself forced to tell you that I cannot obey them. You know well from whom I received my mission, after God and on his behalf. How can I withdraw from this place without his permission? I ask you, therefore, to address yourself to the Bishop: I am ready to go as soon as he shall speak."‡

On receiving this answer M. de Boisy sought an interview with

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* E.N., Tom. XI, Lettre XLVI, p. 117.

† This letter does not claim to be the exact words of M. de Boisy, for three different versions are given by Charles Auguste de Sales, Hamon, and Pérennès.

‡ Pérennès, l. ii, chap. vii, p. 176.

Mgr. de Granier, and having obtained it, complained bitterly of the perils to which his son was exposed. He then begged that the Bishop would content himself with the effort that had already been made, and would recall Francis back to Annecy. Mgr. de Granier once more treated the old nobleman with the same gentleness and tact which he had used on a former occasion. He displayed intense sympathy for M. de Boisy's alarm, and promised to do everything that his conscience and episcopal office allowed him. Then he showed the anxious father several letters, in which the Provost had described the state of affairs in Chablais and the hopes of success to which certain recent events had given rise. The Bishop suggested to M. de Boisy that it would not be very honourable for his son to abandon the work just at the moment when a certain measure of success was possible, to throw down his scythe, as it were, in front of the harvest: and pointed out that such conduct would do the Provost the greatest harm in the estimation of the diocese, and would make him the laughing-stock of the country, in which everyone would naturally apply to him the word of the Gospel: *This man began to build and was not able to finish*. It would seem that, touched on the sensitive point of honour and reassured as to the Bishop's real concern for the safety of his son, the old nobleman withdrew from the interview without insisting any further on the granting of his petition, and Francis found himself once more authorized to continue his work in Chablais.

In addition to his duties at Thonon this Lent, the Provost also undertook the task of giving a number of conferences to the soldiers of Allinges. This kind of mission had the most beneficial results. Doubtless there were some among the soldiers upon whom his labour was wasted, but there were many others in whom a marked change of life became evident, and the general tone of the garrison altered completely. The change was so striking that it was soon noticed by the people of the neighbouring districts. In one case there was a particularly striking conversion. One of the soldiers, deeply touched by a sermon of the Provost's, conceived so deep a fear of the judgement of God upon his past life that for a time he was plunged almost into despair. In his distress he went to Francis and put himself under the Saint's guidance. The latter, deeply moved at the man's earnestness, treated him with every kindness, and by representing to him the infinite mercy of God towards those who repent, brought him back to a state of confidence. Afraid, nevertheless, that the man, if left to himself in his present condition, might fall back again into despair, the Provost made him stay with him in his room, gave him supper, and insisted upon his sleeping there that night. He then prepared him for the Sacrament of Penance, and heard his confession. Seeing how genuine was the man's repentance, and wishing to make him understand that God was infinitely merciful to those who were truly sorry, Francis saw fit to impose upon him only a very slight penance, nothing more than the recitation of an *Our Father* and *Hail Mary*. The soldier expostulated: "Ah, Father, do you want me then to lose my soul? Are you going to give me so small a penance as that for the crimes which I have committed?" "Have confidence in the mercy of God," answered the Saint. "It is greater than all your sins. For the rest, I will take upon myself the remainder of your penance." "But that is not just, Father," replied the soldier. "For I am the sinner, and you are innocent." Francis, however, persisted in his decision, and the man went away consoled beyond measure. A few weeks afterwards the same soldier came to the Provost once more, told him that he was giving up his soldier's life, that he had obtained permission to leave the garrison and the Duke's service, and that he was going to retire to the monastery of the Grand Chartreux, in order to consecrate the remainder of his days to a life of penance for his sins.*

In the meantime the Provost continued his work at Thonon in spite of his discouragement. We get a glimpse of the difficulties he had to contend against in a letter which he wrote about this time to Father Possevin acknowledging a letter and a book which he had received from that distinguished Jesuit.

"Senator Favre, my brother, will have told you how I have now been in this country for seven months. And yet, having preached in this town every feast-day and very often also during the week, I have never been listened to by the Huguenots except by three or four, who have come to my sermons four or five times. A few others there are who come on the quiet, listening always at the doors and windows. . . . Meanwhile I never lose an opportunity of speaking to them: but some do not want to hear; others excuse themselves by alleging the loss of fortune which they would suffer on the breaking of the truce with Geneva, if they were to show the slightest sign of sympathy with the Catholic point of view. And this fact exercises such constraint upon them that they avoid my conversation as much as they can. Nevertheless, there are some among them who are already quite persuaded by the Faith: but there is no way of bringing them to a confession of this so long as the outcome of the truce is uncertain. It is wonderful what power the welfare of this life has upon men. Nor is there any use thinking that one can find a remedy for it: for if I speak to them of hell and the loss of their souls, they take refuge in the goodness of God; if I continue to press them, they at once leave me. . . . Moreover, all the benefices of this country are in the hands of laymen, or practically so. I was hoping that their Highnesses would order that some of these be given up for the support of a few preachers, but here we are still without any other law and order but what the Governor has effected for the time.

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* *Année de St François de Sales*, Avril 3.

"For the rest, I have a few relatives and others here who hold me in esteem for certain particular reasons which I cannot pass on to another: and this it is which holds me fast to the work. I should before now have become very dissatisfied with it, were it not for the hope I have of better things. Moreover, I know well that the miller does not lose his time when he is hammering his mill-stone. And so it would be a pity that anyone else should lose his labour here, when he might do more good elsewhere than I should: for I am still worth little else but to preach to walls, as I am doing in this town at present."*

This discouragement, however, was soon to be somewhat tempered by the promise of several conversions. Amongst the people who were thinking of joining the Church were three men of no little distinction in the country: these were Pierre Fournier, Baron d'Avully and the lawyer, Pierre Poncet. The faith of Baron d'Avully, whose wife was a pious Catholic, had been very considerably shaken on the day on which he had had the good fortune to hear the Provost's first sermon, preached in the church of St Francis, on the subject of the Holy Eucharist. Since then he had read and studied much. This course of reading, supplemented by the long interviews which he had with the Provost either in his house or in an unfrequented meadow, were soon instrumental in proving to him that the truth lay only in the Catholic Church: and the calumnies, contradictions and cowardice of the ministers, which were so many indications of the weakness of their cause, still further inclined him to the Faith. Certain human considerations, however, delayed the open profession of his convictions, and his Catholic friends were forced to content themselves for the time with the promise of his conversion.

Of the case of Pierre Poncet we learn something in one of the Provost's letters to Antoine Favre. "Now at last a few ears of this great harvest are beginning to whiten: and I am in fear lest, if in these troubled times they are not plucked at the right moment, the grains of the true faith be scattered by the gales blowing over this country, especially from the north: for *from the north*, as the prophecy has it, all evil breaks forth. Amongst these ears is Pierre Poncet, a learned lawyer and a man of virtue, who has for a long time held correct views about the Body of Christ in the Eucharist in spite of many pitiful errors on other matters, and who has thus more easily suffered himself to be drawn away from the school of Calvin, which is misled itself and misleads others with regard to this great Sacrament. But his actual entry into the Catholic fold is a difficult business. This, however, he now confesses he ought to do: yet the fear of losing his property, the reproaches of old friends, the uncertain duration of this truce, are so many hindrances to him in his course. . . . Therefore I am staying here to assist at the travail of this delivery. . . ."*

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* E.N., Tom. XI, Lettre XLVII, p. 119.

Towards the end of this same letter Francis mentions the book which he received from Father Possevin and the little gift sent to him about this time by Father Chérubin. "In the meanwhile let me tell you how Father Possevin and Father Chérubin have united in showing the kindness of their sentiments towards me. The latter has sent me a picture of the Virgin Mother adoring her child. As I have with me here scarcely anything to gladden my eyes, I often take in my hands this devout and treasured gift, that comes to me from the hand of a friend. From Father Possevin I received a beautiful book. I had scarcely opened its pages when I discovered in it a charming cradle-song of the Blessed Virgin to the Infant Christ. . . . In these gifts I take comfort; the one will soothe my eyes wearied by the sight of these desolate solitudes of ruined churches, while the other will refresh my ears that have been ringing so long with the sound of horrid blasphemy. Thus have these two friends, showing their kindness towards me, impressed still deeper on my mind with the love and piety of their gifts the image of Christ our Lord."†

A still greater consolation came to him about this time from the Bishop. Mgr. de Granier, hearing of the Provost's hopes of success in the midst of so much disappointment, sent him a letter of encouragement, accompanied by a few little objects of piety as presents. The Bishop in this letter addressed him once more in all those affectionate terms which he had always used towards him, and reminded Francis that his father in God really looked upon him as a son and as the staff of his old age, or rather as the staff of his pastoral office, with which he was gathering the flock into his fold. He exhorted Francis to persevere with renewed courage in his glorious enterprise and never to forget the words of Scripture: *Many are the afflictions of the just: but out of them all will the Lord deliver them.*

Willing as Francis was to continue his labours, he nevertheless felt the need of a rest in which to restore his strength after the weary work of the last seven months. He was accordingly thinking at this time of going on a visit both to his family at Sales and to the Bishop at Annecy. Baron d'Hermance, however, and another gentleman named the Chevalier de Compois, were urgent with him that he should wait a short time longer, as they were in great hopes of soon overcoming the hesitations of Pierre Poncet. Their forecast proved correct, for about April 15 Francis wrote to Antoine Favre: "I have nothing further to tell you except that Poncet, about whom I wrote to you before, has now promised that in a short time he will make open profession of the Catholic Faith. This promise was given to the Chevalier de Compois, who was the first to draw it from him, and then within the hour to me also. In which connection you will see that our knight, in his military fashion, makes no small boast that he thus forestalled me in my joy."*

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* E.N., Tom. XI, Lettre XLIX, p. 122.

† *Ibid.*

The eminent lawyer ratified his promise in a few days. On April 20, 1595, Francis had the happiness of receiving his public abjuration at Allinges in the presence of the chaplain of the castle and of one of his friends, the advocate Ducrest, whom he had called as his witnesses.

The news of Poncet's conversion and the assurance that others were certain to follow him in the near future was received with great rejoicing amongst the Catholics of Savoy. It also had the beneficial effect of convincing some that the Provost's mission to Chablais was not such a desperate and impracticable scheme as they had been tempted to believe. The feeling of his own friends was voiced by Antoine Favre in a letter dated April 19, 1595, written on receipt of the news that Poncet was about to take this important step.

"I can scarcely tell you whether joy or admiration is uppermost in the minds of all, not merely of those who feared that your task was too big for you, but also of those who, while they felt confident of the ultimate issue, could nevertheless scarcely be persuaded that your diligence and labours would garner such plentiful fruit in so short a time. And this the more so because they saw that those whose authority should have been the chief factor in the work, failed to grant you the means and assistance that were needed for so great a task. But now already almost all are persuaded that in a short time our holy religion, banished for so many years from amongst these people, will regain through you its former dignity, and that from thence, as from a well-furnished arsenal, a most powerful engine will one day be drawn for the battle against Babylon.

"And really, what you write to me about the conversion of Poncet seems to me of no small importance: for this man, so I hear, has hitherto enjoyed a great reputation among the heretics, on account of his learning in the law and his skill in the conduct of affairs. May we not hope, therefore, that very many will be so moved by the force of his example as to allow themselves to be conquered at last by the voice of reason?"†

The effect of the lawyer's conversion among the Protestants of the country and of Geneva was equally great, though of a different kind. So general was the dismay at the secession of such an able and learned man, that the ministers had recourse to all kinds of unworthy manœuvres, chief amongst which, of course, was the issue of renewed calumnies against the Saint and his new adherent. They even went so far as to spread a report that Poncet, in punishment for his defection from Protestantism, had become the victim of diabolic possession, and that the Provost was obliged to spend a great part of the night in striving to bring him back to reason by continual exorcism. All the old slanders, and new fabrications still more ridiculous, were spread among the people in the hopes of stopping any tendency to imitate Poncet's example; yet it soon became evident that these lies no longer received the same credence as formerly amongst those for whom they were intended. There were some, indeed, as we shall see, who remained as fierce, violent, and uncompromising as ever: but the leaflets of the *Controversies* and the exemplary conduct of their author in the midst of so many provocations were having their effect upon the more generous minds. Even where there was apparently no hope of conversion, there was a complete change of attitude from open hostility to a kind of sympathetic respect.

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* E.N., Tom. XI, Lettre L, p. 128.

† E.N., Tom. XI, p. 401

Immediately after the reception of Pierre Poncet into the Church Francis felt himself warranted in taking the rest that the wearing of his strength had rendered almost a necessity, and leaving his cousin Louis in charge of affairs at Thonon, he made his way to the château of Sales, where he was greeted by his father and mother with all the interests of love that had accumulated during his absence. After a brief visit to his parents he passed on to Annecy, and here received another warm welcome from the Bishop and the Canons. A short time before this his brother Gallois, who had been originally destined for the priesthood, and on whom had been conferred the benefice of Corsier Anières, had decided to abandon the idea of a clerical career and had resigned the benefice. It happened that during the Provost's visit to Annecy a *concursus* was held for the purpose of appointing a successor to Gallois. Francis presented himself among the candidates and obtained the benefice. It is probable that he took this step as a means of supplying himself with funds for his campaign in Chablais. As the parish of Corsier was held by the Protestants at this time, the title of parish priest only assured to the Provost those of its revenues which had not been seized by the Bernese. As a matter of fact, we know that three years later Francis had as yet obtained no income from this source.

About this time the Provost received from Antoine Favre a book of *Spiritual Sonnets on Divine Love and Penance*. This was a collection of poems written by the Senator and enclosing along with the author's own thoughts a number of ideas gathered from the early sermons of the Saint. In a letter, written from Annecy and acknowledging the receipt of the gift, we get a glimpse of the kind of holiday that Francis was taking. "I am on the point of going away once more, brother, though only for a short time. For my father has called me to him. . . . I shall therefore pass a few days with our people at

Sales. I do not know whether I ought to thank you now—being on the point of mounting my horse—for the sacred poems which you have dedicated to me so affectionately. . . . But I will write at greater length when I shall have had the opportunity of considering the whole book more attentively during the next four or five days; for up to now, busied partly with sermons and partly with other affairs, I have only been able to sample a few of its pages."*

The sermons alluded to in this letter were preached on the feast of Pentecost and possibly the next two days. It was on the Tuesday that he went to Sales for the visit to his parents, but he was back once more at Annecy for the feast of the Holy Trinity, when he was again engaged in preaching.

On the following Thursday, the solemnity of Corpus Christi, which fell that year on May 25, the Saint was the recipient of one of the wonderful spiritual consolations which God reserves for those who have given up all in his service. Having risen early before three in the morning and having gone to the church to meditate in preparation for his Mass, he had chosen for the subject of his mental prayer the mystery of the holy Eucharist. As he was engaged in this occupation, his whole being was suddenly invaded by such a power of spiritual sweetness that his bodily strength gave way beneath it, he fell prostrate to the ground, and was forced to cry out: "Hold back, O Lord, the torrents of thy grace. Depart from me, O Lord, for I am unable to bear the strength of thy sweetness, and am thus fain to cast myself to the ground." When the first effects of this heavenly visitation had passed, he found his soul filled with consolation and peace, and going to the altar, he celebrated Mass in a transport of devotion. Then, when the time for going up into the pulpit arrived, he preached on the blessed Sacrament with a heart so full of divine charity that his whole face was seen by the congregation to be lighted up with a miraculous flame of love. It was the custom of the Saint to consign to writing an account of the spiritual graces which he received from God, so that he might refresh his soul by reviving their memory and might keep in mind the gifts which the divine goodness had bestowed upon him. Amongst his papers was discovered his own account of this particular favour, headed by the words *Visitavit Dominus servum suum—The Lord hath visited his servant.*

The reassuring influence of this heavenly grace came to the Saint at a moment when he greatly needed it: for at the time he was in a state of deep perplexity. It would appear that, urged by the wishes of his father and discouraged by some of the pessimistic views held by certain friends on the situation in Chablais, he was debating whether he ought not to hand over the enterprise to someone who might be more successful than himself. The incident described above came to him, however, as a sign from Almighty God that he was doing the divine will; and it was also providential that he had Antoine Favre, whom he had consulted in the matter, as an adviser. The latter counselled him earnestly to go on with his work in Chablais. In reply to this advice Francis wrote the following: "I am soon hastening back to Thonon, brother, though you are almost the only one that approves of it. Yet your approval alone is enough for me, and I am so minded that at the end of the next four months, that is to say, at the completion of a full year, unless everyone faithfully fulfils his share in this business, I will not suffer any commands but yours to keep me at the task. Let me speak more plainly. Almost everybody believes that we are working in that province independently of the will of the Prince, and very many think that it is even contrary to his wish. Nor is this without reason. For when the slightest word would have been sufficient, his silence is a strong argument, and so also is it to see men in the midst of the Church's domains, under a Catholic prince, living such a precarious and hand-to-mouth existence. I do not wish you, however, to repeat these things to anyone else, for, as you can see, they might be made to assume a dangerous meaning."*

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* E.N., Tom. XI, Lettre XLII, p. 132.

The truth is that at this time the Duke of Savoy was having far too much worry over the consequences of his ambitious intrigues to be able to devote very much attention to the conversion of Chablais. He neither supplied any funds for the purpose of sustaining the missionaries or gave them a word of encouragement in their labours. With the exception of Baron d'Hermance and Claude Marin, the Duke's officials followed the example of their master, and showed the most complete indifference to the work. The only encouragement, therefore, for the Provost was to be derived from friends like Antoine Favre and from the few conversions which had taken place up to then. We learn the exact number of these in a letter which Francis wrote to the Jesuit, St Peter Canisius, about this time. "I have now been among the heretics for nine months, and from the midst of such a great harvest I have only managed to gather eight ears of corn into the Lord's granary: and even this is a great favour, in so far as I am not so much a labourer myself as the forerunner of other labourers. Amongst these converts is Pierre Poncet, a very well-read lawyer and, as regards heresy, far more learned than the Calvinist minister of the place. Noticing in conversation that the authority of antiquity had considerable weight with him, I handed to him your Catechism with the teachings of the Fathers given at length by Busaeus. As a result of reading this work, he suffered himself to be drawn away from error into the beaten track of the ancient Church, and finally gave in his submission. For which the two of us are very greatly in your debt."*

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* E.N., Tom. XI, Lettre LIII, p. 135.

With regard to the rest of the people of Thonon and of Chablais, they were still too much in the power of the Calvinists to make any move. Even if there were any amongst them—as there is good reason to think—who would have liked to return to the ancient faith, yet so great was their doubt as to the power of the Duke to protect them from persecution that externally they professed an undying loyalty to the Protestant religion. In a preparatory sketch for the letter to St Peter Canisius, which differs in several points from the actual missive, we find the following words: " The Prince, by whose authority the work was begun, being immersed in other affairs, pays no attention to the matter. Amidst the rumours of war, the inhabitants fear lest, if the people of Berne or Geneva are once more drawn into conflict against us, anyone who should merely listen to Catholic theologians, much less return to the Church—which they all swear they will never do—will be treated in the worst and cruellest manner."†

One of the first things that Francis did on his return to Chablais was to make a pilgrimage on July 2 to the mountain of the Voirons, in order to pray there at a ruined shrine which had been dedicated to our Lady. This was a hermitage, erected in times past by a Sieur de Langin in honour of the Visitation, and recently destroyed by the Bernese. Francis went there to beg the intercession of our Lady, on the patronal feast of the place, in favour of his missionary work. Somehow or other the inhabitants of the neighbourhood were made aware of his presence and of its object, and while the Provost was at his devotions, he found himself surrounded by an angry crowd of people who called out against him with every kind of insult. These folk, goading each other on, reached such a pitch of excitement that they were evidently on the point of using violence against the person of the pilgrim, when, realizing that he stood in danger of his life, Francis withdrew from them and managed to evade the peril. He ever afterwards considered this escape as a miracle, saying that it was only thanks to the special protection of our Lady that he was enabled to leave the spot unharmed, and that he had every reason to be humbled at the thought that he was not found worthy to die on this occasion in the service of the Son and the Mother.

On arriving at Thonon, the Provost was informed that one of the Catholics of the town was dangerously ill. Knowing that he would soon have to carry the Blessed Sacrament to this sick person, and that he would be called upon to do the same thing in the future for others, Francis set himself to devise a means of taking the holy Eucharist to his sick people without attracting the attention of the Calvinists. Elsewhere, in all Catholic countries, the Blessed Sacrament was carried to the sick in public, the priest being vested in surplice, stole, and veil, and accompanied by acolytes. This, however, was a manifest impossibility in the present case: so the Provost devised the same method of carrying the Blessed Sacrament which is now in use in all non-Catholic countries. He had a small silver box constructed, to which he fastened a chain of the same metal. By this means, when Holy Viaticum had to be conveyed to any of the sick, he was enabled to carry the sacred Species through the streets without attracting attention, bearing the Blessed Sacrament within this new kind of pyx upon his breast, and himself wrapped around with a long cloak. His heart was filled with an almost ecstatic love for his divine Master on these occasions, and his face was so transformed by the ardour that burned within him as to become noticeable on some occasions to those who saw him. At times he had a difficulty in restraining his tears. "O my Saviour," he would say, "reign in the midst of your enemies." And again: "My beloved is mine: he reposes upon my breast. *The sparrow has found a place for shelter and the dove a nest for its little ones!* O Queen of heaven! how does it happen that your divine Son has chosen my breast as the place of his repose?" Yet it was a great grief to him to be thus obliged to hide the Blessed Sacrament from the eyes of others, and to deprive it of due honour. In order to repair this deficit as much as possible, he warned his few Catholics that, when they should see him walking along the street, closely wrapped up in his cloak, showing the external signs of recollection and saluting no one by the way, they would then know that he was bearing the God of Majesty to visit the sick, and that on such occasions they should strive to leave everything, and follow him at a distance, without attracting the attention of the Protestants. The people faithfully obeyed his directions, and would quietly assemble in the house of the sick, which thus became at that time the only place where they could give full rein to their devotion towards the banished Sacrament. One day the Procurator-Fiscal, Claude Marin, having met the Saint while the latter was thus carrying the holy Viaticum, and not recognizing the fact by the usual signs, stopped the priest, in order to discuss certain important matters that lay between them. Francis gently warned him of what was happening. "I am carrying the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords," he said in a low voice. "We will talk of our business another time. Leave me for the moment, I beg you, and, if you come after me, take care not to seem to be following me."*

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* E.N., Tom. XI, Lettre LIV, p. 140.

† E.N., Tom. XI, p. 164.

From about the summer of 1595 religious affairs in Chablais began to assume a more favourable aspect, and, in spite of occasional indications of discouragement, the Saint's letters take on a more optimistic tone. For one thing the species of interdict decreed against the

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* Dep. of Claude Marin. C. A. de S., l. ii, p. 115.

Catholic sermons was losing force, and a certain number of Protestants were attending his conferences. On the feast of St Alexius, July 17, several of the Calvinists, deeply moved by his eloquence, showed an inclination towards conversion. It was evident to the Provost that before long it would be necessary to find more workers in the missionary field, and for this reason he went to Annecy to try and arrange for such help with his Bishop. On the feast of St Peter's Chains, August 1, the patronal solemnity of the Cathedral, he took his place among the Canons, and preached on the subject of the day. On the morrow he wrote to Antoine Favre:

"I have determined not to lay down the burden of the harvest at Thonon, though it is one too heavy for my shoulders, without your advice and commands. Nevertheless, while I am striving by means of every art and expedient to find other labourers and funds for this work, I can achieve no result or success in the midst of the innumerable wiles of the enemy of mankind. I have been in no small measure worried, and am now very much worried indeed, because so many catastrophes threaten our heads that scarcely any chance seems to be left of cultivating that devotion of which we have now such special need. Nevertheless, we must lift up our souls with the help of Christ to the hope of better things: *when you shall hear of wars and seditions, be not terrified.*

"I am, however, greatly comforted by our Possevin's faithful remembrance of me. For I have received his little present, and also the *Sponde* sent by our friend Girard. . . ."

The *Sponde* mentioned here was an apologia by a convert of the famous Du Perron, afterwards Cardinal. The conversion of this Jean de Sponde had created a great sensation among the Calvinists, who, in order to cover their defeat, had resorted to their usual tactics, as we shall see from what follows. The Provost's letter continues:

"How opportune, indeed, is the arrival of this book of Sponde's with its new preface you will understand from the following fact: the ministers of Geneva and Chablais have found no better way of destroying the influence of so important a man than by spreading the report that, having gone raving mad as a punishment for violating his faith, he is now being hidden away in some corner of France. Moreover, the Genevans have been boasting that some Demosthenes or other of their school has controverted the arguments of Sponde with such eloquence and solidity, that the latter had first lost his newly acquired religion and then, a short time afterwards, even his mind. What made me place no faith in their story was, on the one hand, their proficiency in the art of lying, and, on the other hand, that lately these same men with the greatest impudence asserted that Poncet was most cruelly tormented by the devil, and that I was secretly occupied in driving the unclean spirit out of him by nocturnal exorcisms. If they lie so boldly about that which happens in our immediate neighbourhood, what will they not venture to invent about one who is so far away?"*

Although at the end of this letter the Provost informs Antoine Favre that he was returning to his "Sparta" on the following day, it is probable that he found reason to change his intention, for there exists another letter to the same friend, dated a few days later from the château of Sales; and we also know that on August 23 the wedding of his sister Gasparde with Melchior de Cornillon was celebrated in his presence.

Shortly after this, however, he was back once more at Thonon, engaged in his numerous pastoral duties—frequent sermons in the church of St Hippolytus, interviews with his new converts, visits to the sick and poor. He also continued his journeys into the country. Sometimes he would go to Douvaine, where dwelt Michel Foras, a relative and family friend in spite of a difference of religion. At other times he made his way to Veigy, the seigneur of which was a Catholic. This gentleman, Pierre de Grailly, had recently married Mlle. de Suchet, the same lady whose hand had once been sought by M. de Boisy in his parental anxiety to find a wife for Francis de Villaroget. The Provost also visited the district of Corsier Anières, of which, as we have seen, he had recently been nominated parish priest. These journeys were not jaunts for amusement or curiosity, but were made in the course of his work, including the usual labour of preaching wherever he could and the equally usual enduring of hardships and insults. Sometimes in the midst of his wanderings in unfamiliar parts he was still caught by the approach of darkness and had to content himself with any shelter he could find. On one such occasion he and Georges Rolland lost their way towards evening in a dense forest, and, after wandering about in one direction and another for a time, came upon the remains of some ancient walls. They soon recognized the ruin as being the remnants of an old church, and as there was a part of the roof still left, they decided to remain there for the night. It was only natural that, as the Provost rested upon the moss-covered stones, his mind should dwell upon the ancient worship of which these walls had been the witness, and only natural for him too that, contrasting the former glory with the present devastation, he saw in it a figure of the mournful fortunes that had befallen the country around him. Instinctively there rose to his lips one of those prayers, full of the poetry of Scripture, of which he was so fond. "O sacred temple, I know not to which of the saints you were dedicated, but here within your ruined walls I adore the God of eternity and his only Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who, having suffered so much for me, has thus given me example to suffer for him. *Arise,*

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* E.N., Tom. XI, Lettre LIII, p. 157.

O north wind, and come, O south wind, blow through my garden and let the aromatical spices thereof flow. O Lord, grant thy blessing to our designs. *Send forth thy Holy Spirit* into the hearts of this poor people and *kindle in them the fire of thy love.* Let it be thy good will that *the walls of Jerusalem be built up: then shalt thou accept the sacrifice of justice, oblations, and whole burnt-offerings. O God, the heathens are come into thy inheritance, they have defiled thy holy temple:* nevertheless, prepare our hearts, so that within them at least the Holy Spirit may find a worthy dwelling-place." Gradually, as he finished his prayers, the weariness of the day's work brought rest in its train, and he slept peacefully through the night. When the day dawned, his faithful companion aroused him, and he went forth once more upon those labours which were to effect with the help of God's grace the fulfilment of his prayer.*

On returning home after these missionary journeys, the Provost would spend a part of the night in prayer and study. Not only was he continuing the work of his *Controversies* at this time, but he was also composing a polemical treatise—*De Summa Trinitate et Fide Catholica*—which was to be inserted by Antoine Favre in his *Fabrian Code.* One evening, while Francis was thus working in the house of Mme. du Foug, his attention was aroused by the sound of whispering, of stealthy movements about the building and of the subdued clinking of weapons. Realizing that such unaccustomed noises meant the presence of assassins in the house, he quickly retired to a hiding-place, which had been prepared for him by his hostess. Soon afterwards several armed men broke into his room, and not finding him there, as they expected, searched the house from top to bottom. Frustrated in their enterprise, they at length withdrew, muttering against the Saint their usual explanations of sorcery and witchcraft.†

The failure of this attempt upon the Provost's life and his other wonderful escapes had no small part in encouraging the belief amongst his enemies that he possessed preternatural powers. This belief was still further encouraged by the preaching and diatribes of the ministers, who either from inner conviction or from a desire to encompass their opponent's death as a wizard, continued to harp upon the string of sorcery. Such rumours naturally caused the greatest distress to the Catholics, some of whom came to Francis, to warn him of the campaign of lies which was being waged against him. They told him that the ministers had sworn that he entertained familiar relations with the devil: that a man had been found who asserted on oath that the Provost had been seen in one of those nocturnal assemblies of sorcerers, known as a Sabbath, and that this man had expressed his willingness to be hanged if the marks of the devil were not found upon the Catholic priest. Francis was unable to restrain his laughter at the relation of these wonderful stories. "Here," said he, making the sign of the cross, "is my only mark and my only charm. With this powerful sign I bring the devil into subjection, I drive away the storms of the air, the *terrors of the darkness*, and *the business that walketh about in the night*. Armed with this sign, *I will not fear what man can do unto me*; if *whole armies should stand together against me*, it is in this sign that I place my hope. And if the ministers want me to perform some marvel, let them come to me, and with this sign I will teach them all that they want."*

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* C. A. de S., l. ii, p. 98.

† C. A. de S., l. ii, p. 103.

The seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost (September 17) was a notable day in the history of Chablais. Francis took for his sermon the subject of the holy Eucharist as figured and foretold in the Old Testament, and he promised that in the near future he would continue his proofs for the Catholic belief from the promises made by Christ, as related in the sixth chapter of St John, and from the words of institution. Turning to some of the Protestants who were present, he said to them: "And you, gentlemen, who follow the opposite party, I adjure you by your salvation and by the blood of our Saviour, that you come and hear the reasons of the Catholic Church, in order that it cannot be said of you that you condemned her unheard. And leave behind you every kind of human passion in this matter. Do not consider the solidarity that you have with one or other party, but simply the question as to whither the Scriptures, reason and true theology will carry you. And in accordance with what you then see, determine that, laying all else apart, you will declare yourselves upon the right side."

The Provost speaks of this sermon in a letter written to Antoine Favre on the morrow.

September 18.—"A wider and bigger prospect, brother, is at last opening out for our harvest of Christians. For yesterday it nearly happened that D'Avully and the town syndics, as they are called, came openly to my sermon, because they had heard that I was going to treat of the most august Sacrament of the Eucharist. So anxious were they to hear me on the Catholic belief and arguments with regard to this mystery that, though they did not venture so far as to come openly, lest they might seem unmindful of their rule, yet they actually listened to me from a certain hidden annexe. I only hope that they were not prevented from hearing me by the feebleness of my voice.

"For my part in this pursuit I made the following promise: that in my next sermon I would give proofs of this dogma from Scripture clearer than daylight and would defend it with such force of argument that not one of our adversaries could fail to see he was blinded by densest darkness, unless he was of those who choose to divorce themselves from human reason. They know right well that by these assertive proposals they and their like are being called down into the arena, so that, if they do not come, they will be regarded as utter cowards who fear the attacks of the Catholics, and are afraid even of such an insignificant adversary as myself.

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* C. A. de S., l. ii, p. 102.

"The event is assured: for since they have already arrived as far as discussions, in a short time, according to the proverb, they will come to surrender. As a matter of fact, the advocate Du Crest has informed us that the people of Thonon have unanimously agreed to present us with their profession of faith, as they call it, so that we can discuss those things on which we differ either in familiar and private conversation or by confidential writings. Whilst some wish to impose this commission upon their minister, others are more prudently opposed thereto, lest, entering the arena with us, he should be overcome by scholastic subtleties; for he is totally ignorant of philosophy.

"Truly it is a good sign that they are taking up the fight through the medium of their representative, and that, troubled by our puny forces, they are thinking of putting forth conditions. For ourselves, with courage strengthened by the grace of God, we look forward to this controversy, ready and rejoicing, with good hopes as to its issue."*

From time to time the Provost received affectionate letters from his friends encouraging him in his work: others sent him poems on the controversies of the day, of which he made good use, distributing them among the citizens of Thonon. Of these latter a M. de Prez was particularly anxious to read such poems and studied them with pleasure. About this time also Antoine Favre dedicated to the Provost the twelfth book of his *Conjectures on Civil Law*, from which dedication we think well to take the following passages:

"Since your kindness has admitted me into the inner sanctuary of your friendship, I have seen, clearer than the day, how much you deserved to be loved even by those who were not bound to you by any tie. And who, indeed, would have so little sense as not to admire, love and honour the noble qualities by which, while still so young, you have acquired such renown? . . . I do not speak merely of your learning and of your eloquence, the fruits of a fertile and cultivated mind. There is in you something far more preferable—your goodness, your moderation, your unfailing calmness of temper, and all those other virtues of a naturally noble soul. Rarely in any man is found a single one of these virtues in such a high degree as all are found united in you, so that no calumny has power to darken them, and those alone can refuse to love and respect them who are of such poor nature as to think that the hatred of virtue is a virtue itself.

"For myself," the author goes on, "I shall feel that I have gained

* E.N., Tom. XI, Lettre LIX, p. 158.

everything, if my book passes down to posterity as a little monument of our close union, in order to make known to all that never has anyone loved you more, or placed a greater value on your friendship, than have I."

About this time Francis had the grief of losing Baron d'Hermance. The latter died suddenly at Chambéry after a dinner at which, according to Ricotti, he believed himself to have been poisoned. Antoine Favre, writing on November 22, speaks of the Governor's death and of the loss to himself and to the state which the removal of such a man entailed: he says nothing, however, of any suspicion of poison.

The Provost, meanwhile, continued his apostolic work with unremitting zeal. He found his surest consolation, amidst the various troubles that assailed him, in his intercourse with Almighty God and especially in the holy Sacrifice. Each day he said his Mass in the chapel of St Etienne de Marin, which was about a mile and a half from Thonon. Sometimes, however, he would go to the castle of Allinges for this purpose, so as to provide the soldiers of the garrison with an opportunity of fulfilling their religious duties and of keeping up the spirit of reform which he had introduced in their midst. From Allinges he would go down to the parish church at the foot of the hill. He was not able to say Mass here, as the place was lacking vestments and church furniture, but he would preach, hear confessions and give Holy Communion with the sacred Species which were preserved there. One day an old man, who had already been to Communion that morning and had found therein a wonderful consolation, presented himself a second time with other communicants. "My friend," said the Provost, "have I not already given you communion? You must go back to your place. You are not allowed to receive the Blessed Sacrament twice in the same day." "Ah, father," answered the old man, "since God is present in the Sacrament, I beg of you to give it to me once again. One is so happy in his company." Francis, full of admiration for such simple love, was forced, nevertheless, to send him away, but promised to give him Communion again if he would return the next morning. The old man obeyed, and presented himself on the morrow, when the Provost was able to grant him the happiness he so much desired.*

Sometimes very few people presented themselves to listen to the Provost's instruction and to participate in whatever religious service the conditions of the place allowed. On one such occasion only seven people were present. Someone suggested to him that so small a congregation was hardly worth the trouble of a sermon. Francis answered that he was neither encouraged by a large audience nor discouraged by a small one: that if only one person received some edification, it was sufficient for himself. He went up, therefore, into the pulpit and began to preach on the invocation of the saints, treating the subject very simply, in a catechetical manner, without any particular effort to appeal to the merely sensitive faculties of his little audience. Amongst those present was an official of the town of Thonon, who a short time before had been received into the Church by the Provost. As the instruction continued, this man began to weep, sighing and sobbing in a manner that showed no attempt to restrain the expression of his grief. As Francis, to use his own words, had said nothing that was very pathetic or very vehement, he was naturally astonished at this emotion, and thinking that the man had been taken ill, offered to stop his instruction, in order to give the other any assistance that was in his power. The official answered that there was nothing amiss with his bodily health, and begged the Provost to go on with the sermon, which was just the treatment which he needed. When the discourse had come to an end, the official left his place, and going up to the Provost, flung himself down on his knees. "Provost, Provost, you have saved my soul to-day. Blessed be the hour in which I came and listened to you! That hour has gained me an eternity." Then of his own initiative he confessed before them all that, though he had become a Catholic, he had always been troubled about the doctrine of the intercession of the saints, and that, having discussed the matter with the Protestant ministers, he had been so shaken in his belief as to promise to abjure the Catholic religion in a few days. The sermon he had just heard, however, had given him the instruction which he needed, and had dispelled all his doubts. It only remained for him to detest the promise he had made and to renew his subjection to the Catholic Church. He went on to describe how edified he had been by the Provost's preaching to so few. "I was wondering," he said, "what the Provost would do; if he would put off the sermon or if he would say nothing. I swear to you that if he had acted thus, or if, on preaching, he had not treated of this matter, I should not have delayed beyond the morrow my renunciation of the Roman faith and my acceptance of the doctrine of Calvin." When relating this incident years afterwards to Bishop Camus, the Saint concluded with the following words: "I cannot describe to you the impression which this great example, happening in such a small assembly, made throughout the country, and how many souls it brought back to us, full of a spirit of submission and eager to receive the word of light and truth."*

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* De Cambis, p. 155.

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* It is not quite clear where this incident took place. Charles Auguste places it in the church at Allinges. As we have seen, according to Hamon, the saint was not able to say Mass about this time in this church; yet Camus makes St Francis, in the Saint's own account of the incident, describe it as

Towards the end of the year 1595 an important change took place in the prospects of the mission of Chablais, due to the fact that in some way or other the attention of the Duke of Savoy was at last recalled to the missionary work which he had himself initiated in his northern possessions, but of which he had since shown an astounding forgetfulness. Apparently the Duke had instructed Baron d'Avully to obtain information as to what measures should be taken to prosecute successfully the work which had been undertaken by Francis de Sales. In order to supply this information, the Provost wrote the following letter to his prince on December 29, 1595:

"MONSEIGNEUR,

"Since it is your Highness's wish to be informed of the means which I think most effective for the accomplishment of your holy desire of seeing these people of Chablais reunited to the Catholic Church (as I learn from M. d'Avully, to whom it pleased you to write about the matter), I will simply and faithfully say what I think about it.

"It is absolutely necessary that there should be a reliable and unfailing revenue for the upkeep of a considerable number of preachers, who shall be freed from all care other than that of imparting the Gospel to the people. It is for want of this that, though we are now in the second year since the beginning of our mission here at Thonon, and though we have preached without ceasing, our work has borne very little fruit. And this partly because the inhabitants, seeing us live from hand to mouth, have been unable to credit the fact that we were preaching by command of your Highness, and partly because we have been unable to bring in a sufficient number of labourers for the task, for we had no means either to house them or to feed them. Indeed, the actual expenses which have been incurred up to the present have not yet been provided for. For this purpose it would suffice to grant us the pensions employed before the war for the upkeep of more than twenty Huguenot ministers who preached in these bailiwicks, if your Highness would be pleased to order that these funds be promptly applied for this purpose.

"It would also be necessary to have the churches rebuilt and to endow them with revenues sufficient for the priests who would be placed in charge of them. For the missionary preachers could not be attached to any particular spot, but should be free to go anywhere amongst the bailiwicks, as necessity should arise. Above all, it is

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taking place after Mass. Charles Auguste says it was on St Stephen's day, and the subject of the sermon might well be drawn from St Stephen's prayer, resulting in the conversion of St Paul. The saint, in Camus's narration, says that it was on a Sunday, and gives the badness of the weather as an excuse for the poor attendance (Vide *Esprit de S. François de Sales*, Part II, Section 38).

necessary to rebuild and furnish the churches of this town of Thonon and of the parish of Allinges, so that priests should be stationed there for the administration of the sacraments. For in both these places there are already a good number of Catholics and several others, well disposed towards the Faith, who, for want of spiritual facilities, are in danger of being lost. Moreover, this would also help considerably in familiarizing the people with the exercise of the Catholic religion, especially if it were possible to carry out the ceremonies in a dignified manner, with, for instance, the accompaniment of organs and other adjuncts of solemnity. At any rate, it should be done in this town which is the connecting-link with the whole duchy.

"But our preaching will be of no avail if the inhabitants fly from the sermons and conversations of the pastors, as they have done up to the present in this town. May it then please your Highness to order that a letter be written to the syndics of the town, and that one of the senators be commanded to come here for the purpose of a general convocation of the burghers. Then, when all are assembled, this senator, wearing the robes of his magisterial office, should invite them on behalf of your Highness to hear, examine and consider closely the arguments which the preachers put before them on behalf of the Catholic Church, from the pale of which they were torn without reason by the mere violence of the Bernese. This should be done in terms that reveal the charity and authority of a benevolent prince—such as your Highness is—towards a misguided people. It will be by some such gentle violence, my Lord, that they will be constrained to submit to the yoke of your holy zeal, and that a wide breach will be effected in their obstinacy. And if it please your Highness to employ for this purpose Senator Favre, I consider that his kind disposition and his capability would be most successful therein.

"M. d'Avully also, with his example and the friendly pressure which he could exercise upon individuals, would greatly aid in the work: this I think he will do willingly in accordance with the good will and readiness which he has shown, and which, indeed, I have always observed in him since the beginning of my stay in this country.

"After this, the formation of a company of men-at-arms or cavalry, with a view to enlisting the young men, would be a useful means of attracting youths of spirit towards religion, according to the advice of the late Baron d'Hermance, provided that they were trained in a religious spirit with a certain amount of Christian instruction. Also, in case of obstinacy, it would be advisable to bar, by way of edicts, those persisting in error from all judicial duties and public positions. Finally, if to all this was added the foundation of a college of Jesuits in this town, it would do much good to the whole neighbourhood, which, as regards religion, is almost completely starved."*

* E.N., Tom. XI, Lettre LXIII, p. 168.

The letter ends with a complimentary paragraph of congratulations and thanks such as was usual in those days, when addressing personages of the highest rank.

There is one suggestion in this letter which to the modern mind will savour of narrow-minded persecution and bigotry. This is the clause in which the Provost suggests that "those persisting in error" should be barred from all offices. It must be remembered, however, that such was not merely the policy but the law of both the contending parties in the great religious struggle of the times, whether Catholic or Protestant. Those who, in the view of the governing body, ranked as heretics were legally barred from all public offices. One may be pardoned for reminding the reader that such a law still exists against Catholics in Great Britain to-day with regard to the sovereignty of the empire. Moreover, the contention of Francis de Sales was a very moderate one, when compared with the penalties and severities against Catholics in those same days in England. The penalty for exercising priestly functions, or for harbouring a priest, was death, accompanied by the cruellest and most disgusting torture, and those who refused to attend the Protestant churches were fined in a ruinous manner and often condemned to long periods of imprisonment.

About this time the news reached Thonon that Count Francis Martinengo, the Duke's lieutenant-general, had arrived at Fort St Catherine. This fort had been built by the Duke not far from Geneva, with a view to defending his territory against attacks from the north and to its standing as a menace to the Genevans. Francis desired to see Count Martinengo on the subject of an extra tax that had been imposed by Charles Emmanuel, with the authority of the Pope, upon the clergy: he also hoped to meet with Antoine Favre in the neighbourhood of Geneva, to which city the Senator had gone, in order to see about the printing of one of his books. The Provost, having received this information one evening, at once mounted his horse, and travelling all night, reached the neighbourhood of Geneva in the morning. Both Martinengo and Favre, however, had just left the district, and though he at once continued his journey in search of them, he was unsuccessful in his pursuit. He thereupon made his way to Thorens, on a visit to the château of Sales, and it was during this visit that he acted as godfather to a little daughter of Gaspard de Sales, his cousin. He also stayed some days at the château of a Baron de Chevron, in order to arrange certain business matters with the brothers and other relatives of his host.

On his return to Chablais about February 7 or 8, he found that the flooding of the Drance had carried away a part of the bridge across which he had to pass, in order to say Mass at the chapel of St Stephen. A plank had been thrown over the gap thus created for the convenience of those who had courage enough to use it, but on several occasions this plank was so covered with ice and snow as to render its crossing a matter of the gravest risk. The Provost's friends tried to dissuade him from braving such a danger, but he was so fixed in his resolution not to miss his daily Mass that he refused to listen to them. As it was almost impossible to walk across the plank in its dangerous state, he used to go down upon his hands and knees, after making the sign of the cross, and in this manner drag himself over the chasm, without sustaining any harm. A short time afterwards the bridge was repaired. Nevertheless, the new Governor of Allinges, Baron de Ternier, was so anxious to prevent any further risks on the part of the Provost that he restored and refurnished the old chapel of the monks of St Bernard, situated below Thonon on the borders of the lake. It was in this building that for some time afterwards Francis celebrated Mass, generally assisted by some fifteen Catholics: here also he liked to recite his Office, make his daily meditation, and spend hours of prayer before the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle of the altar.

That the patience and industry of the Provost were at last succeeding in producing a favourable impression upon the people of Chablais is evident from a letter written by him about February 8 to Mgr. Giulio Cesare Riccardi, Archbishop of Bari, Apostolic Nuncio at Turin. Francis mentions that a certain number of conversions had taken place in Thonon and that four or five parishes had asked that priests might be sent to serve them.

It is at this time, February 8, 1596, that we find the first allusion to Mgr. de Granier's desire that Francis should be appointed as his coadjutor. In a letter to M. Chavent, secretary to the Duke of Savoy at Chambéry, the Provost wrote: "As to the coadjutorship, every reason and my own experience forbid my desiring it, and the duty, honour and zeal which I have for my Right Reverend Bishop will ever hinder me from thinking of the episcopacy, so long as God gives him to me as my prelate. When it shall be the will of God to deprive me of him, my own incapacity will be the obstacle."*

The movement towards Catholicity was still further accelerated by the sermons and instructions which Francis preached during the Lent of 1596 wherever it was possible. On March 19, 1596, he was able to write to the Duke as follows: "The disposition which I find at present amongst this people of Chablais is such that, if, in execution of your Highness's holy intention, we were to restore the church promptly at Thonon and in several other places, I am not afraid to assure your Highness that in a short time he would see the greater part of all this country reduced. For in the town many are so well disposed, and others so shaken in their conscience, that, if the opportunity were given to them, they would infallibly reach the port which your Highness desires for them. As to the rest of the country, people have already come from ten or twelve parishes to ask that the exercise of the Catholic Faith be granted them."*

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* E.N., Tom. XI, Lettre LXV, p. 182.

Noting this change of attitude in the people of Thonon, Francis at length passed on to a new phase of his campaign. On a certain market-day he made his way to the public square, or place, and there, mounting upon a chair, he preached for two hours with such force and eloquence that a large crowd left all business and grouped themselves around him in attentive silence. The effect of this open-air preaching was that many of the Protestants felt shaken in their belief, and some were heard to say, as they left the place for their homes: "May the good God guide us in the right way!" Moreover, the Provost took this opportunity of openly challenging the minister to disprove the truth of the things which he had taught.

The minister of Thonon, Louis Viret, was, as we have already seen, a man of no great learning. It is quite manifest that he felt himself unequal to the task of combating his opponent with the weapon of dialectics. Instead of accepting the challenge thus thrown down to him, he preferred to affect a sovereign contempt for the preaching of his adversary, and contented himself with disparaging comments on the Catholic missionary both in public and in private. "Beware," he would say, "of this man's empty display of learning. He is nought but a sophist: and his only merit is a fair acquaintance with the figures of rhetoric." This attitude was by no means satisfactory to his co-religionists, and they made no scruple of expressing to him their views on the subject. "But why," said they, "do you not attack him in dispute? Why do you allow him to play the insolent in this town? He has boasted that his arguments are so strong that he defies the devil himself to answer them. Make him put forth his arguments, so that if reason is on our side, we shall not be left to believe the contrary. He says that we are wanting in courage and accuses us of faint-heartedness. Test him once for all. And indeed, sir, both your comfort and your honour are at stake, unless you can put a stop to his career."†

Irritated by these remarks and spurred on by the knowledge that such sentiments were becoming only too common amongst his adherents, Louis Viret convoked a general assembly of the ministers of Chablais and of Vaud, so as to agree upon a united policy in the face of a situation that was rapidly becoming critical. The convocation agreed to challenge Francis de Sales to meet them in a public disputation. It was hoped that such a challenge, pitting him alone against their united forces, would so intimidate the champion of catholicity that he would feel himself obliged to beat a retreat. Consequently their astonishment was very great when the bearer of their challenge returned to them and gave them an account of his interview with the Provost. Francis de Sales had received the proposal with delight, protesting that no better news could have been brought to him: indeed, so evident was his eagerness that the envoy of the Protestants had felt that he himself could do no less in all honour than fix the actual place, date and time of the conference proposed.

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* E.N., Tom. XI, Lettre LXVII, p. 189.

† C. A. de S., l. ii, p. 119 *et seq.*

Then the troubles of the ministers really began. The first thing to do was to fix upon a confession of faith, that is to say, a declaration of those points of doctrine the belief of which they considered neces sary as a condition for salvation. Now the principle of private judgement, however comfortable and convenient in some ways, is not one that renders easy the formulation of even the most simple creed. The discussion had not gone far when disunion broke out in the midst of the convocation. What seemed necessary to one was deemed unnecessary by another: and there were almost as many different opinions on that confession of faith as there were individual brains to aid in its formulation. Any sort of consent was apparently an impossibility: and the enterprise of the public discussion received its first check.

Apparently the ministers, in despair of concord, were eventually inclining towards the belief that it were better to avoid the public controversy altogether. But here they were met by the objections of Baron d'Avully. This nobleman was one of the bulwarks of Protestantism in the country. He had read and studied the theology of Calvinism both widely and deeply; he had had many conferences with the most learned exponents of the creed in Geneva; and he had been once strongly prejudiced against the ancient faith. His wife, however, was a Catholic, he had numerous Catholic friends, he had read a certain amount of Catholic theology, and he had a better knowledge of what the Roman Church actually did teach than most of his fellows. His faith in Calvinism had received something of a shock, as we have seen, on hearing the first sermon of the young de Sales: since then he had had numerous interviews with the Provost and had been greatly influenced by the latter's learning, personal charm and sanctity. The Catholic party considered that he was an almost certain convert: yet in this, as in many such cases known in history, they were inclined to be previous. D'Avully was not the man to abandon his first religion without a great struggle and without considering everything which could be said in its behalf. He had during the present crisis assisted at all the meetings of the ministers, and he was determined that, if possible, the public disputation should take place, and that the truth, on whichever side it lay, should be brought forward into the daylight. Consequently he neglected no means or persuasions to induce the ministers to redeem their pledge and to meet Francis de Sales in the manner agreed upon.

The day fixed for the disputation having arrived, a large crowd of the citizens of Thonon assembled at the place indicated. Francis also was punctual to the appointment. But, to the astonishment of all, no one else put in an appearance. At length, after waiting for some considerable time, the crowd was relieved on seeing Louis Viret arrive upon the spot, and gathered around ready for the contest. Great was the disappointment, therefore, when the minister, instead of opening the controversy, proceeded to tell his audience, in his own name and in that of his confrères, that, having duly considered the matter, they did not consider it advisable to undertake so important a matter without first obtaining the authorization of the Duke of Savoy, lest their disputation bring more harm than profit to both parties in the business. Francis, disappointed as he was, could not refrain from smiling at the feebleness of the excuse that was offered as an explanation of the ministers' conduct. He at once pointed out that such frivolous pretexts clearly indicated the unwillingness of the Protestant champions to engage in the controversy: as to the permission of the Duke of Savoy, nobody could have the slightest doubt that his Highness would be certain to grant it; but, inasmuch as his opponents desired it, he himself would at once take steps to procure it. The Provost lost no time in seeking out the Governor and placing the matter before him. Baron de Ternier, knowing the Duke's wishes, immediately wrote out in his own hand and stamped with his own seal a parchment, granting to the ministers full permission to dispute, discuss, treat and confer in controversy with the Lord Provost de Sales in public, in private, within the town and without it, when and how it should please them. Armed with this imposing document, Francis returned to the attack. Deprived of their first excuse, however, the ministers invented others, and though the Provost easily demonstrated the futility of these pretexts for avoiding the discussion, he could not persuade them to come to an issue. The ministers, both of Chablais and of Vaud, betook themselves to their homes, leaving the astute Viret behind them with the difficult task of presenting their excuses in any terms that might seem credible.*

Nobody was taken in by these manœuvres. It was at once realized that the ministers, disunited by their own internal differences, did not feel themselves strong enough to put up a good defence against their capable adversary. The thing was a triumph for the Catholics, who were thus greatly strengthened in their belief. On the other hand, the Calvinists could not but feel their position acutely: even those who had been most prejudiced were inclined to give the

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* C. A. de S., l. ii, p. 121.

Catholic Faith a respectful hearing, whilst those who had already felt a leaning towards the old religion became still further disposed to embrace it. Several people immediately asked the Provost to grant them personal interviews on the subject of religion: and he on his part was more than willing to accede to their request. Though he had no fear of a public discussion, he knew that such personal interviews were of greater utility; there was less chance of party rancour, and the needs of the different minds could be more surely discerned and supplied. "There were very few indeed whom he did not gain over in these private interviews, kindly enlightening all their doubts, solving their difficulties with precision, opening out to them the beauties of the faith rather than discussing their objections, and speaking to all, not so much as an adversary more anxious for victory than for truth and keener to justify his own reasoning than to impart his belief, but like a father solely preoccupied with the happiness of his children."*

During the spring of this year 1596 Francis was again the recipient of a great spiritual consolation. On April 19, the Friday of Easter week, while he was engaged in prayer, his heart became so enkindled with the fire of divine love that the concealment of his ecstasy was impossible. The charity of God seemed to flame within him like a fierce and consuming fire. "Amor meus, furor meus," he wrote in memory of this visitation. "It seems to me, indeed, that my love for my Beloved has become within me a fiery rapture. . . . For I burn with the desire of God." It was this same divine charity that drove him in his untiring pursuit of souls and gave him renewed courage in face of the many trials that beset him.†

A few days afterwards he made his way to Annecy with the twofold object of attending the diocesan synod and of finding priests and missionaries to work in Chablais at a time that seemed so propitious. He felt so assured of the promise of the future that, writing to the apostolic Nuncio on May 6, 1596, he said: "If a sufficient number of preachers are sent to me, I hope very soon to give you joyful news."‡ These preachers he hoped to obtain through the influence of the Duke of Savoy, who, it was rumoured, would arrive before long at Chambéry. In the meanwhile, in order to lessen the weariness of his waiting, he went to pass a few days at Sales with his parents. But this forced inactivity at a time which he knew to be critical was a severe test of his patience. He wanted to be at work in the midst of his little flock. "I am absolutely languishing in this long wait for the coming of his Highness," he wrote to M. d'Avully. "If the Duke does not come next week, I shall return to Thonon. In the meanwhile I am sending my cousin thither."§ He mentions in this letter the fact of two more conversions among the Calvinists.

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* Hamon, l. ii, chap. iii, p. 217.

† *Année de S. F. de S.*, Avril 19.

‡ E.N., Tom. XI, Lettre LXX, p. 195.

§ *Ibid.*, p. 198.

Disappointed at the continued absence of the Duke, Francis soon returned to Thonon. Here, in addition to his preaching and his journeys among the villages, he found another task awaiting him. This was an increase in the number of catechetical instructions which he found himself obliged to give. A number of persons were making earnest enquiries as to the teaching of the Church, and for their sakes he gave frequent instructions, not only in the Church of St Hippolytus but also in private houses, especially in those of M. de Blonay and of the Procurator-Fiscal, Claude Marin. In the hope of attracting more people to the meetings in the church, he also organized a method of instruction by dialogue. It happened that in July he received a visit from two of his young brothers, and he enlisted one of these, whose name was Bernard, in the service of his apostolate. Having composed a dialogue upon the essential teachings of the Church and upon the duties imposed upon Christians, he placed it before his brother in order that the latter might learn by heart the answers given to a number of questions and difficulties. When all was ready, the Provost gave out in the town that on a certain evening there would be a public dialogue on religion in the church of St Hippolytus, and the novelty of the idea succeeded in attracting a considerable crowd both of Catholics and Protestants. Francis took upon himself the rôle of proponent, and voiced the questions and difficulties which it was the business of his brother to answer: the dialogue thus produced was carried on with such vividness and skill that all who heard it were delighted, and a great deal of useful knowledge was conveyed to the audience in a manner which made their instruction both easy and interesting.

Amongst the people who sought out the Provost at this time, for the purpose of discussing the subject of religion, was Baron d'Avully. Struck by the conduct of the ministers, who had not ventured to test their belief at the recently proposed conference, and shocked at the divergences of opinion which he himself found amongst them, when they had tried to formulate a common creed, he had been unable to overcome his growing conviction that their doctrine was at least suspect. He came, therefore, to Francis de Sales for further enlightenment. The latter was only too glad to meet such an advance. Alluding to the disagreements amongst the ministers, he pointed out that this disunion was the logical consequence of the fundamental principle of Protestantism, which gives to each individual the right to interpret Holy Scripture according to his own ideas: that unity of belief only exists, and can only exist, in the Church of Rome, which recognizes a sovereign authority, holding the divine mission and power to give an infallible decision on the meaning of Holy Writ and to lay down definitely those articles of faith to be believed by all. He then went on to demonstrate the antiquity of the Catholic teaching, which had remained unchanged, though more clearly defined, since the days of the Apostles, and in contrast with this he pointed out the novelty of much of the Calvinist doctrine and the weakness of the reasons that supported it—a weakness so evident that Protestant writers had even been reduced to falsifying the texts of Scripture, as could easily be ascertained by anyone who studied their apologetics. The Baron, strongly determined not to assent to anything which was not supported by valid proofs, set himself once more to his studies, in order to verify for himself the assertions of his new teacher: and the more he studied, the more did he find that sincerity and truth were on the side of the Catholics and error and falsification on the side of their opponents. Yet he was not disposed to yield without a thorough investigation of the whole question, and he returned again and again to the Provost for instruction and debate. Finding that in the town their interviews were frequently interrupted, they decided to meet elsewhere, and selected for their rendezvous a certain meadow-land hidden away in the depths of a wood. Here they would pace side by side for hours, thrashing out each question with the thoroughness of men whose sincerity was as great as their learning and whose suppression of self eliminated from their discussion all trace of personal bitterness. When at last Baron d'Avully had brought his mind to an almost complete conviction of the truth of the Catholic claims, he proposed to the Provost a final test. He wished to send to the ministers of Berne and Geneva an exposition of those proofs of the Catholic doctrine which seemed to his mind the most striking, and to beg them to reply, not with assertions unsupported by proofs, but with direct and solid arguments. In spite of the delay that this proceeding would entail, Francis gave it a warm approval. He felt assured that the only result would be to strengthen the Baron still further in the true belief and to make of him a more convincing defender of the Catholic faith. The issue demonstrated to the full the accuracy of his forecast, though in an unexpected manner. D'Avully wrote to the ministers in accordance with his own suggestion. Whether they found themselves unequal to the task, or whether they considered him too far gone towards Rome for any reclamation on their part, they made no answer to his request. Concluding from this silence that they had nothing to reply, the Baron took the decisive step, and, as a preliminary to his reception into the Church, came to Francis de Sales and made a general confession of his whole life. Out of consideration for his numerous Protestant friends in the neighbourhood, however, he decided that it would not be well to make his profession of faith at Thonon. The final act took place at Turin on August 26, 1596, when, in the presence of the Inquisitor of the

Faith, he pronounced his abjuration of the errors of Calvinism and declared his adhesion to the Catholic, Roman and Apostolic Church. He then received Communion at the hands of the papal Nuncio, who, on the same day, sent news of this notable conversion to the Cardinal de Santa-Severina. The event was considered to be of such importance that Pope Clement VIII addressed to the new convert a special Bull of congratulation.

As may be imagined, this conversion was the beginning of a distinct movement towards Rome on the part of the people of Chablais: a considerable number of Protestants, drawn on by the example of Baron d'Avully, asked to be instructed and to be received into the Church. This movement caused no small consternation among the Calvinists. Once more they had recourse to the ancient and worn-out calumnies: they did not aver that Baron d'Avully had been immediately possessed by the devil on account of his defection, as they had done in the case of Pierre Poncet, but they resuscitated the fable of the Provost's preternatural powers, and spread the report that their late champion had fallen a victim to sorcery exercised upon him by the Catholic priest. Meanwhile, the minister La Faye, who held a rank in Geneva second only to Beza, strove to persuade D'Avully that the latter had been deceived. In a moment of enthusiasm he even volunteered to go to Thonon himself, and there in the Baron's presence demonstrate that the reasons which had motived his conversion were of no value. The Baron took him at his word, and making his way to Thonon, warned Francis of the intended visit of the minister for the purpose of a conference. The rumour of this disputation quickly spread abroad through the country. The Protestants, confident in the reputation of such a man as La Faye, rejoiced in the thought that now at last they would witness the triumph of their cause. The Catholics, on the other hand, betrayed a certain amount of nervousness: they knew that their beloved pastor was learned and eloquent, but they were not without fear that he might suffer at least an apparent defeat at the hands of so redoubtable an antagonist as the well-known Calvinist minister. The confidence of the one party and the anxiety of the other proved, however, groundless. It would seem that on second thoughts La Faye had repented of his offer. At any rate, he never put in an appearance at Thonon. D'Avully went to Geneva three or four times, in order to urge him to make good his word. La Faye put him off with evasive replies. Even when the Baron pressed him to come, not only in fulfilment of his promise, but in the name of his honour and of his religion, even then he deferred the matter by means of various pretexts of a flimsy character.

Tired of these continual evasions, Francis took public action. Fearing lest, if the conference did not take place, a rumour would go forth that he himself, afraid of the consequences of such a disputation, had refused to meet the Protestant champion, he went up into the pulpit and made his position clear. He declared that he, on his part, was ready and anxious for the dispute, but that his adversary declined the contest in spite of every pressure exercised upon him not to withdraw from a meeting which had been proposed not by the Catholics but by the minister himself. He ended with these words: "It is not that I do not esteem myself the least of all those who might present themselves for the defence of the Church. Indeed, I do not rely upon myself or upon my own cleverness, but solely upon the excellence of my cause and the authority of my mission. I hope that God, having sent me through the instrumentality of my Bishop to announce his word, will give me understanding to confound the errors of the ministers, just as he gave unto twelve ignorant men the power to confound the wisdom of all the philosophers in the days of old."*

In order to prove the truth of what he said, Francis went still further. He proposed to the Baron to go himself to Geneva, if the latter would accompany him, and dare La Faye to the conference in the stronghold of Calvinism itself. This suggestion delighted d'Avully. They set out, therefore, for Geneva, accompanied by Canon Louis de Sales, one of the town councillors, Pierre Fournier, and several other inhabitants of Thonon, of whom the greater part were as yet Protestants. By this means they ensured the presence of reliable witnesses to everything that might occur during the conference. On being admitted into the presence of the minister, Francis at once explained the object of their visit. "You gave your word to Baron d'Avully a long time ago," he said, "to go to Thonon and prove to him in my presence that I had led him into error and imbued him with false doctrines. As you have proved unwilling to do this, I have come myself to your house to defend the truth of my doctrine and to convict yours of error. I leave with you the choice of the subjects to be discussed, because there is not one with regard to which I do not feel capable of showing that all those who depart from the Roman faith are in the deepest error: and I propose to do this in the presence of M. d'Avully by means of unanswerable proofs."†

Surprised as he was by this sudden visit of his opponents, the minister saw that it was impossible to avoid the challenge, and he accepted the proposal with an air of assurance. Both parties immediately made their way to one of the public places, called the Place du Moulard, and there the minister, choosing one of the points of doctrine in dispute at that time, opened the controversy by stating his case. Francis immediately replied and in a short time reduced La Faye to such difficulties that the latter hurriedly altered his point

* Dep. of François Favre.

† C. A. de S., l. ii, p. 129.

of attack and broached another subject. "One moment," retorted the Provost. "Answer to the point in question before going on to any other."—"I am using the right you granted me to choose any subject," replied La Faye. Francis followed him, therefore, over the new ground, and once again, as in the first case, succeeded in driving his adversary so hard that La Faye again went off at a tangent. And so the controversy went on for the space of three hours, during which they carried the dispute over a wide range of subjects—the unity of the Church, the Sacrament of the Eucharist, the sacrifice of the Mass, good works, Purgatory, the intercession of the Saints and several other matters. At length the minister, finding himself hard pressed, no matter what subject he chose, began to feel the strain of the controversy: his language became embittered and angry; he burst forth into a torrent of insults, proclaiming that Francis was a sophist, an enchanter, a false prophet, who seduced his hearers with the insidious charm of a specious eloquence; and finally he put an end to the controversy by retiring to his house in a state of the deepest dudgeon, in spite of all that d'Avully could say to him. The Baron closed the whole incident by addressing those present: he pointed out that the cause of the ministers must be bad indeed when, instead of answering objections with good and solid arguments, they had recourse to insult and invective; for his own part, he desired to express before them all his deep regret that for so long a time in the past he had himself been the dupe of lies.*

About this time the inhabitants of Allinges and Mesinges promised to make a solemn abjuration of heresy. This move was rewarded by the grant of several special privileges on the part of the Duke of Savoy: and Mgr. de Granier also took measures to provide them with a resident priest. The Provost, using powers granted to him by his Bishop, appointed as curé of Allinges and Mesinges M. Pierre Mojonier, a priest well known for his eloquence and for his wisdom in the guidance of souls, who had formerly served the church at Larringe beyond the Drance.

Several other Protestants of note were received into the Church about this time. Amongst these was Gabriel d'Avully, son of the

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* M. de Pérennès appends a note to his description of this incident, alluding to one particular point. Did this controversy take place in the public square? It seems exceedingly unlikely, when we are given to understand by other incidents related in the life of St Francis that it was dangerous in the extreme for a priest even to enter the city at this time. Charles Auguste seems to infer that the controversy took place in the minister's house. Both Hamon and Pérennès, however, give the names of those who declared in their sworn depositions that the controversy took place in the public square: one witness, François de la Pesse, claims to have had it from Georges Rolland; and another, Mère Jacqueline Coste, is said to have been actually present at the discussion itself.

Baron of that name, who made his abjuration in the church of Abondance on October 4. Others were devoting themselves to the study of the Fathers, and gave evidence of a strong inclination to embrace the Catholic faith. Even one of the ministers was showing signs of wavering, though it might perhaps be considered that his motives were possibly somewhat mixed. This was a man named Pierre Petit, who had been a minister at Choulex for several years, but who, having been deposed by the Consistory for some reason or other, had recently taken refuge at Thonon.

That Francis had to endure a good deal of opposition, not merely from Protestants, but even from Catholics at the Court of Turin, is evident from a letter which he wrote to the papal Nuncio, Mgr. Giulio Cesare Riccardi, Archbishop of Bari. Speaking of the conversion of M. d'Avully and of that nobleman's presence in the capital, the Provost writes: "I was hoping he would tell His Most Serene Highness how little we have been able to accomplish up to now in this country, and what is necessary in order that we may see in a few months the accomplishment and confirmation of this sacred work. But according to what he has told me, there are not wanting people at that Court to calumniate his conversion to Holy Church and my own intentions in these few labours of mine. For this reason he was inclined to believe that he would not easily gain credence, and so omitted to speak further of the matter. This it is which makes me more and more anxious to go to Turin myself in order to obtain a declaration of the good will of His Highness upon so important a business.

"And if, as should be done, the proper orders are promptly given, I shall return sure and certain that in a short time we shall see the ripening of a happy harvest of several thousand souls. If, on the contrary, these orders are not given, I shall crave your approval and permission to abandon this enterprise to others more capable than myself. My heart breaks at finding myself unable to satisfy whole parishes which desire to be nourished with the holy Catholic doctrine, and all for want of means to send them a sufficient number of preachers and pastors. I can no longer remain here to become the laughing-stock of our enemies, who, seeing that no further order is given, despise my ministry, of which, nevertheless, it is my duty to be jealous in every possible manner.

"As to the calumniators, I hope one day it will be recognized—what God knows to be true—how far I am in this from all ambition, and that in these few labours of mine I do not seek the good opinion of my superiors, except in so far as is necessary to fulfil this mission and others of the same kind. Against all these tongues I find sufficient protection in the goodness of your Lordship; for the rest the slanderers will never be able to pour forth the waters of their detraction in sufficient quantity to extinguish the zeal that burns in Their Highnesses' hearts."*

Soon after this Francis received a letter from the Duke of Savoy, calling him to Turin in order to discuss those measures which the Provost thought should be taken in order to further the conversion of Chablais. He immediately set out for a consultation with Mgr. de Granier, with whom he discussed and settled the proposals to be made to the Duke of Savoy: then, having composed a memoir of these suggestions, he departed on his journey, accompanied by Georges Rolland, about the beginning of the month of October. His way lay across the Great St Bernard: after having reached the foot of this mountain, not without great suffering and difficulty, he set himself boldly to make the ascent. He had already accomplished the greater part of his journey towards the summit of the pass, when he was overtaken by a furious storm. Driven by the force of the gale, the snow seemed to whirl down upon them from every direction, and had soon covered all traces of the way. The cold became intense, chilling them both to the bone, and the horses they were riding seemed scarcely able to carry them. Putting their trust in Providence, the travellers advanced blindly as best they could, and at length they were rejoiced to see rising before them the walls of the monastery which St Bernard had built upon this height as a refuge for travellers. The monks received the two half-frozen wanderers with the greatest kindness, and soon drove away the effects of the cold and exposure by the warmth of their generous hospitality. They were particularly insistent the next day that the travellers should not continue their journey until the storm had somewhat abated: there was danger in venturing forth under such conditions; only two days ago the monks, while on their errand of mercy, had come across the bodies of some unfortunate wayfarers, who had been frozen to death in the snow. One cannot feel inclined to blame Georges Rolland for experiencing considerable trepidation on hearing the monks' description of the dangers that awaited him: but nothing that the religious could say had power to daunt the Provost. To everything which they urged he answered that pressing business in the interest of souls called him at once to Turin, that for their own personal safety they must trust in Providence, and that it was absolutely necessary for him to depart at once. The Saint's trust in the divine protection was fully justified: in spite of great difficulties and the cruel inclemency of the weather, he and Georges Rolland arrived safely at Aosta, whence they were able to continue their journey to Turin without delay.

The Duke of Savoy received Francis with the greatest kindness. Having convoked his Privy Council, to which was also added the presence of the papal Nuncio, His Highness requested the Provost to place before them those suggestions the accomplishment of which would, in his opinion, be likely to secure success in his mission of Chablais. Francis responded to this invitation with the following address:

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* N.E., Tom. XI, Lettre LXXII, p. 203.

"I recently wrote to your Most Serene Highness in answer to your request for information with regard to the conversion of Chablais, and I frankly laid before you my opinion. Now that you have summoned me for a fuller explanation, I repeat once more that it is absolutely necessary to assign certain revenues for the maintenance of preachers, that it is also necessary to restore the churches, appoint and instal parish priests, instil fear into the inhabitants by suitable edicts, remove heretics from office, give occupation to the Catholic youth by military service, drive out the ministers and especially those of Thonon, found a college of Jesuits, honour the Catholics with positions and dignities, and show a certain liberality to the new converts.

"I would now add, if Your Highness wishes me to particularize matters, that there ought to be at least eight preachers who should be free and released from all other duties—for the upkeep of each of whom an annual revenue of one hundred crowns would be necessary.* With regard to the parishes and churches, inasmuch as many are ruined and pulled down, it would entail an enormous cost, were it proposed to restore them all: for this reason it will be necessary to join several districts into one, and in this manner it would be sufficient if there were about fifteen or sixteen large parishes with curés attached. But inasmuch as these parish priests will need curates to aid them in the administration of the sacraments on account of the great distance between the churches, a double revenue will have to be allotted to them: and the more so because they will have to entertain the preachers who may be sent to them, and distribute a certain amount in alms, both as their personal duty and as an example. This double revenue might amount to one hundred and sixty golden crowns† for each curé, in addition to the grant of a house, a garden, a meadow and a small acreage of field. In the town of Thonon especially, inasmuch as it is the connecting link with the whole duchy, the Offices should be chanted in a suitable manner: for this purpose the curé would have to have the assistance of six other priests, and to defray this expense a revenue of four hundred crowns would be needed. But above all things it is imperative that what has already been expended up to the present should be repaid—a sum which amounts to two hundred crowns.

"As to what I have said with regard to the Jesuits, if it is impossible

* A golden crown was equivalent to about 3 francs 68 centimes (pre-war).

† About 590 francs.

to obtain their collaboration in the near future, there should at least be a Catholic schoolmaster.

"I have another suggestion to make. There is amongst the Huguenots a consistory, composed for the greater part, if not entirely, of laymen, presided over by a layman, and attended by one of Your Highness's officers, who, however, has no decisive vote. In this consistory it is customary to correct, reprehend and censure, either by reprimand or by some slight penalty, those offences which the magistrate is not wont to punish, such as drunkenness, over-indulgences in balls, dances, games, dress, and banquets, differences between husband and wife, disobedience on the part of a son to his father, cruelty of a father towards his son, immorality, adultery, indecent language, loose songs, oaths, blasphemies, and similar excesses of young men. By means of this organization the people are kept in discipline with as much benefit as is allowed by the wretched principles of the religion in which they have placed their trust. It will be a good thing to leave some form of consistory to the people, when newly converted to the Catholic religion: but with this difference, that, inasmuch as these corrections ought to be made by word and reprimand in the spirit of the Gospel, the President will be one of the preachers whom it shall please the Bishop to appoint. He will have as counsellors the principal men of the town and of the neighbourhood, half of whom shall be ecclesiastics and half laymen, of a ripe age, of serious disposition and of good renown. Amongst these laymen one of Your Highness's officials shall always assist with the right of a decisive vote. By this assembly correction would be meted out, according to the Gospel counsel, with all charity. It might also be granted the power of inflicting some slight penalty, should such be deemed suitable, and even fines, the benefit of which might be applied to the poor or the restoration of the churches. As to corporal punishment, it could be limited by Your Highness to a few days' fasting, to be undergone in prison, without, however, any stigma of infamy being attached thereto.

"These are the matters that press, Monseigneur, and in the execution of which there should be no delay. If, however, Your Highness wishes to go still further, he should take into consideration this fact—that formerly between the river Drance and Geneva there were fifty-two parish churches, with nineteen more in the bailiwick of Ternier, not counting abbeys, priories, convents and chapels. The properties of all these benefices have been almost entirely alienated by the Bernese. Several ecclesiastics are in lawful possession of a few of them. The other fruits were bestowed upon the military order of SS Maurice and Lazarus by Pope Gregory XIII on June 13, 1579: and from this source several commanderies have been founded. Your Highness can easily divine what I am suggesting and what ought to be done. It is necessary to take these fruits in order to maintain both parish priest and preachers. For what other means do we possess? In this matter, as Grand Master of the Order, you are invested with sovereign power and authority.

"Such, Monseigneur, is the condition of your country of Chablais. When I say that it is a ruined province, I am uttering nought but the truth. It rests with Your Highness to restore it. As to myself, I have already spent twenty-seven months at my own expense in that unfortunate country, in order to spread therein the seed of God's word, according to your will, as signified to me by the Lord Bishop of Geneva. Yet can I say aught but that I have sown among thorns or even upon rocks? Certainly, beyond the conversion of M. d'Avully and of the Advocate Poncet, not much has been effected with regard to the others. I pray God, however, to grant us better fortune. And Your Highness, in accordance with your piety, will surely never permit that all these plans and all these efforts should be in vain: but rather, since you have already acquired renown by that same piety, you will prefer this victory over the cruelty of heresy to all the others which await your power."*

The Duke at once proceeded to express his appreciation of the wisdom of the Provost's proposals and his admiration for the energy and perseverance with which the work in Chablais had been prosecuted. He then directed Francis to submit his suggestions to paper, so that he, the Duke, could study them at his leisure: he also commanded that two other copies be made, one for the Nuncio and one for the Chancellor of the Duchy. He then summoned the principal knights of the Order of SS Maurice and Lazarus, in order to confer with them about the suggested employment of the ancient ecclesiastical revenues entrusted to their charge. Of these gentlemen Thomas Bergera and Joseph de Ruffia seem to have held the highest official positions in the order, and they were deputed by the knights to carry on negotiations with the Provost in their name. They assured Francis de Sales that they would be glad to co-operate with him in such a good work, and proposed to him that they should go to Savoy to find out what best could be done. They were then dismissed from the Council. Charles Emmanuel, on his part, promised to help the Provost to the full extent of his power, and authorized the latter to establish for the present six parish priests in Chablais, who should be provided for by the funds that were to be supplied by the knights. He furthermore commissioned the Nuncio to watch over the matter and to see that these directions were carried out.

When the Council was over, it would seem as if the Duke retained Francis de Sales for the purpose of a more personal interview, during which he asked the Provost's opinion upon several matters, interrogating him as to what was going on in Savoy, and as to what could be done in order to improve the condition of the people. It must be confessed that in the furtherance of his schemes, whether they were born of his ambition or of a genuine love for his religion or of a very human mixture of both motives, the Duke possessed one attribute of a great ruler. He made the fullest use of the cleverest men in his realms, gleaning all manner of information from them, seeking their advice upon the problems of the day, and despatching them on missions which necessitated the use of great intelligence and diplomacy. We have an example of this in the present instance. One of the dreams of his ambition was to regain possession of Geneva, the city which had formed of old one of the fairest heritages of his forebears, and which they had lost in the political and religious upheavals of the Reformation. On this matter he now consulted Francis de Sales, probably seeking to sound in this way the minds of his ecclesiastical subjects and to discover what support they would be likely to give him in his projects against the city. It is quite evident from what follows that in these enquiries he suggested as the motive of his designs that furtherance of the Catholic cause which he knew to be so dear to the Provost's heart. The latter replied that without any doubt the cause of heresy would be greatly weakened if Geneva were reduced and overcome. In his opinion it was the stronghold of Satan, whence heresy was spread over the rest of the world, a fact made evident by the following points. Firstly, Geneva was the capital of Calvinism: for Calvin and Beza had chosen it as their place of domicile. Secondly, all the so-called reformed churches of France were in union with the ministers of Geneva, both in points of doctrine and in several matters of policy and discipline. Thirdly, all heretical towns regarded it as the asylum of their religion and as a holy city—in testimony of which Francis quoted the fact that a man from Languedoc had come that year to the city in the same spirit in which a Catholic would visit Rome. Fourthly, there was no town in Europe which had greater conveniences for the maintenance and propagation of heresy. "For," went on the Provost, "Your Highness knows well the advantages of its geographical position, situated as it is at the gate of France, Italy and Germany: so that there are found within its walls the inhabitants of every nation, Italians, Frenchmen, Germans, Poles, Spaniards, Englishmen, and natives of provinces even still further distant. Moreover, everyone knows the great number of ministers who reside there. Last year this city supplied no less than twenty-four to France alone, and even England seeks its ministers from Geneva. What need I say about the costly and magnificent printing-presses, by means of which this town fills the earth with villainous books? It even goes so far as to distribute them at the expense of the public: and this very year the pamphlet written by Rochechandieu was printed and distributed gratis at a cost of seven hundred golden crowns. In addition to this, there are the schools, in which are found a great number of young noblemen from France, such as the Sieur de Sponde: also from Germany, such as Father Louis, the Capuchin, son of the Lord High Chancellor of Saxony, who went through a course of study there. Nor should we forget the continual work of preaching, lessons, conferences, disputes, writing and such like, which further the spread of heresy in a wonderful manner. Fifthly, all the enterprises engineered against the Holy See and the Catholic princes have their origin in Geneva. But what need to mention that fact, Monseigneur, to you who have so often discovered the treachery and cunning of these rebellious criminals? Sixthly, is there any town in Europe which receives so many apostates from every ecclesiastical grade, secular and regular? The thing is notorious of itself.

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* C. A. de S., l. ii, p. 140.

"From all of which I conclude that, if Geneva be overthrown, heresy itself will be destroyed: and, if I am not mistaken, the following measures, which I thought of long ago, would be of considerable utility towards this end. Send good preachers into Chablais, Gex, Ternier and Gaillard, such as one could obtain from the Society of Jesus and from the Order of Capuchins. These, however, should be permanent and zealous. Now I do not see how they can be permanent, unless they have definite means of existence, and receive their mission direct from the Holy See. It would also be necessary to have a college of Jesuits at Thonon, and to set up at Annecy a printing-press, to publish the writings of learned men against the heretics, and in this way make one nail drive out another. Your Highness will ask how one could maintain a printing-press in so small a town. The College will contribute all that it can, and if we make an application to His Holiness, he would willingly grant a pension of a hundred crowns, to be taken from the superfluous revenues of some abbey. Why, for instance, should we not apply to so good a work the prebendary stipend granted at present by the monks of Talloires to a layman for the cutting of their wood?

"There are many who desire to be converted but are held back by the fear of poverty—and this I know from experience. But what remedy is there for that? My Lord, there ought to be founded at Annecy or at Thonon a kind of workhouse, in which those who have learnt the mechanical arts can work and live: and, in addition to that, a seminary should be built for those who are studying letters or who have already done so. In Your Highness's state of Savoy there are any number of rich abbeys whose revenues could be employed for this purpose at the behest of His Holiness—abbeys in which, I venture to say, the monks are religious in name only and who are the cause of scandal rather than of edification. But, Your Highness—allow me to say it—it is certain that for want of money many are wanting in courage. As soon as such order is restored as will guarantee that people will find a secure living, you will see what numbers of Genevans will come and take up their residence in the other towns. True it is that these remedies are small of themselves and slow in action: but what more can one do, since the misfortunes of this age of iron permit of no others?"

"What you say is true," answered the Duke: and then, shrugging his shoulders, as if to indicate his powerlessness in the matter, he proceeded to complain very bitterly of the hardships of the times. On the Duke's enquiring of the Provost whether the latter could make any further suggestions that would be useful at the moment, Francis continued:

"Those matters which are closely connected with the destruction of Geneva belong neither to my province nor to my inclination: Your Highness possesses more means towards the accomplishment of that affair than I could think of. Nevertheless, in order not to depart from the subject of Geneva, since Your Highness's goodness allows me to speak, I will place before you something which concerns your very humble servants, the Canons of the Cathedral Church of St Peter of Geneva. A few years ago, when Your Highness came into Savoy to wage war against the Huguenots in your zeal for the Catholic religion, you declared it to be your will, by letters patent, that all church goods should be restored, especially those belonging to the Cathedral Church of Geneva, which is one of the first churches in your states and the most illustrious and ancient amongst them: and this your will has been ratified by your sovereign courts of the Senate and of the Chamber of Finance. Now that the Holy Catholic Faith has obtained entrance into Chablais, we very humbly beg Your Highness that it may please you to extend this same command, so that our poor chapter may regain possession of the property which belongs to it of old, and especially of the benefice of the church of Armoy. If Your Highness were not always aware of it, I could describe to you the poverty which these poor Canons endure from day to day. Deprived of all human help and driven from their own city like thieves, they have been forced to celebrate their office in a church begged from others. In spite of this, they manage by the grace of God to do so well that there is no church in Europe where the Divine Office is celebrated with more solemnity, when we consider their extreme poverty. Pope Paul III, having regard to their want of means, had granted them half the fruits of each benefice of the diocese during the first year of a vacancy, in order that the other churches might help, in some small way at least, their mother church. Popes Pius IV and Gregory XIII had exempted them from the payment of tenths, however great might be the necessity: in spite of this, during the past years, '89, '90, and '91, all the corn belonging to the church was seized by Your Highness's officers, so that the Canons were forced to beg the means of livelihood from their relatives and friends. Nevertheless, the Sovereign Court of Finance has given judgement that for the corn thus seized more than 2,600 florins are owing to the Chapter. For this reason Your Highness is humbly besought to be so good as to ratify the decisions of the Sovereign Pontiffs. As regards the payment of the 2,600 florins, if it would please you to give orders that vestments be supplied for the use of the church, you would thus gloriously imitate the piety and liberality of your ancestors, especially of that very great prince, Duke Amadeus I, who, after having ceded the papacy for the sake of tranquillity throughout the whole of Christendom, contented himself with remaining Bishop of Geneva, and died beneath the mitre of that church."*

Francis concluded by begging the Duke's pardon if, perhaps, he had enlarged too fully upon so many unhappy subjects, but excused himself on the ground that great princes, such as His Highness, were of necessity obliged to obtain information about their states even to the slightest particulars and details. He then withdrew to await the Duke's decisions.

Eventually Charles Emmanuel announced his will that the holy Sacrifice of the Mass should be celebrated in the principal church of Thonon; that ecclesiastical property should be restored to the parish priests; that the people of Thonon should be assembled by a senator in order to be informed of his wishes; that he himself should be supplied with full information about all the ecclesiastical revenues of Chablais, in order to dispose of them in the best manner possible; that the Canons of the Cathedral Church of Geneva should regain possession of the benefice of Armoy, usurped by the Genevans, and that they should be exempted from the payment of tenths, according to the will of the Sovereign Pontiffs: for the rest, they must hope for the best. Finally, he dismissed the Provost with the following letter:

"Charles Emmanuel, by the grace of God Duke of Savoy, to our well-beloved and loyal syndics and burghers of the town of Thonon. We have learnt with great satisfaction that you have listened to the preachers of the word of God and of our sincere Catholic Faith, whom you have had amongst you continuously for some months. Now, hoping that this opportunity will open to you the way of salvation, we exhort you to make use of it with the same zeal which we have employed in procuring it for you. You will make good use of it, if you take heed to the arguments which will be expounded to you, if you weigh them fairly, and if you present to the preachers the difficulties which may suggest themselves to your minds. For there is nothing we desire so much, nothing which will give us greater pleasure than to hear that you are profiting by the use of the Holy Catholic religion. May God have you in his keeping."*

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* C. A. de S., l. ii, p. 143 *et seq.*

In addition to this letter for the people of Thonon, Francis was also the bearer of two other documents, one to the Supreme Judge of the province of Chablais, and the other to the Governor of Allinges. By these the Duke of Savoy directed that these two officials should encourage the Catholic mission in every way, and should see that the people of the country had full liberty to attend the preaching of the missionaries.

Supplied with these letters, the Provost set out on his homeward journey. He returned by way of the little St Bernard, and avoiding Annecy, lest he be detained there by quarantine against the plague, arrived at the château of Sales. Here he resolved to wait for the more formal letters patent which had been promised by the Duke and for the supply of resources to which the knights of SS Maurice and Lazarus had engaged themselves. Unfortunately, neither the letters nor the money came to hand: the Duke was busy with a political crisis; and the knights refused absolutely to restore the benefices. Francis, in his distress, again had recourse to the papal Nuncio. He first expressed his fear lest the political events of the day should cause the Duke to put off till later his promised help to the mission of Chablais. The writer then goes on: "Not knowing in which direction to turn, I most humbly beg Your Lordship for the love of God not to allow the season of Advent to finish without my seeing our Lord brought back into this country. Obtain for us, therefore, with your usual charity, that the exercise of the Catholic religion may be inaugurated in, at least, two or three localities, if, on account of the cold, no more can be done at present. It means so much just to make a beginning. If Christ comes to us like a tiny child during the days of the Nativity, he will then grow little by little *unto the measure of the fulness of age.* . . . I am about to return to Thonon, although I am certain to be the laughing-stock of our enemies until His Highness's order reaches us. . . ."†

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* C. A. de S., l. ii, p. 148.

† N.E., Tom. XI, Lettre LXXIII, p. 205.

CHAPTER IX*

(1596-1597)

Letters to the Nuncio at Turin—Mass at Thonon on Christmas day—Conversion of Pierre Fournier—Riot in Thonon on occasion of Ash Wednesday—Correspondence on various matters—Francis goes to Geneva—Meets Jacqueline Coste—First interview with Beza—Ministrations in Geneva—Attempts to reform the abbeys of Aulps and Abondance—Father Esprit accompanies Francis to Thonon—Dispute between Father Esprit and Louis Viret—Condemnation in Geneva of Galletier, a Calvinist minister who inclined towards Catholicism—Second interview of Francis with Beza—Third interview—Relations with M. and Mme. de Blonay—Francis writes a treatise on Demonomania

FRANCIS seems to have reached Thonon once more about the end of November, for we find another letter to the Nuncio dated from that place on November 29, 1596, one sufficiently interesting to merit quotation. It throws an interesting sidelight on the rather arbitrary measures by means of which funds were still being raised for the building of St Peter's.

" Your Lordship's goodness encourages me ever more and more to take advantage of your favour. A nobleman of Savoy, named M. de Vignod, living in Rome, bequeathed a long time ago the sum of 400 crowns to two churches of this diocese and another sum of 200 to one in Tarentaise. Now there exists in Rome, I am told, a decree according to which legacies for pious works remaining unclaimed for the course of a year must be applied to the building fund of St Peter's in Rome. The administrators of this fund, seeing that the legacies have not been paid within the prescribed time, claim the right of retaining them. Therefore I very humbly beg Your Lordship to be so kind as to write to whomsoever it concerns, in order that these poor little churches of our country should not be deprived of the help accruing from these legacies. With regard to this matter the following facts ought to be taken into consideration. One is that the parish priests of these churches only had knowledge of these legacies a short time ago, and that they were absolutely unaware of the Roman decree: it is, therefore, on their part a matter of invincible ignorance. The other is that, even if the above-mentioned priests were guilty of crass ignorance, it is not fair that the parishes and churches should undergo the loss and penalty. There should also be taken into consideration the calamity which up to the present has closed the routes into Italy. These country priests could hardly have been obliged to go to the trouble of obtaining passports from His Highness; for in this manner the legacy itself would have been consumed by expenses which these clerics were not themselves in a position to undergo."*

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* Hamon, l. ii, chap. iv.

On December 12 he again wrote to the Nuncio: "I have received His Highness's order for the three hundred crowns, destined to cover the expenses already incurred, at the same time that Your Lordship's letter reached me. I very humbly thank your kindness therefor, as also for the authorization to absolve those who have relapsed into heresy. I will use this permission—of which we have great need—with all the discretion that it shall please our Lord to grant me.

"Since I came back here, utterly unsupplied with the means necessary for this work, I have been the laughing-stock of these wretches. Nevertheless eighty persons, great and small, have been won over. . . . Your Lordship has restored life to me by assuring me that, in spite of the complaints of the knights, we shall soon have the means of extending somewhat the exercise of Catholic worship amongst these people. . . . I am delighted that those good gentlemen the knights consider that the ecclesiastical property of Chablais is so inconsiderable, for, being so very generous, they will willingly give it up for the service of God. . . . I have again found here a number of individuals and whole parishes well disposed with regard to our holy faith. If His Highness's intentions are zealously carried out, a great movement towards conversion will ensue. . . . I cannot omit to tell you that the enemy is assiduous in directing against M. d'Avully every possible attack, in order to counterbalance the effect of his conversion: he is stirring up against that gentleman a great deal of hatred, both amongst the heretics and the Catholics. Berne, in particular, is striving by threats to prevent him from persuading others to come over to our faith. Nevertheless, he does this at every opportunity, and considers himself happier in enduring tribulation as a Catholic, than in enjoying great prosperity as a heretic. It is an evil beast, is heresy: and knows how to make the most of every disagreeable incident."†

On learning the success of the Provost's mission in Turin and the prospect of Mass being celebrated in Thonon itself, the Catholics of that town were delighted. Naturally, this news had quite the contrary effect upon the Calvinist ministers, and they went about murmuring all kinds of dire threats. "We will soon put a stop to this wickedness," they said. "And inasmuch as we are not blind, we will see if anyone will erect that altar." Meeting Francis one day in the street, they said to him: "You are boasting that you will bring about the triumph of your religion in this country. We shall find a way of settling the matter, and we shall see then whether you are a sorcerer or a prophet." "By the mercy of God," answered Francis, "I was never a sorcerer, nor have I any desire to be one. Neither am I a prophet: for I do not deserve that divine gift. It is reserved for souls more worthy of it than am I. Nevertheless I tell you that in a short time Calvinism will give way before the Catholic religion. God himself will effect this change, and will show himself the Master at last." "If anyone dares violate our privileges to such an extent," retorted the ministers, "we shall proceed to the extremest measures rather than endure it."*

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* N.E., Tom. XI, Lettre LXXVII, p. 212.

† N.E., Tom. XI, Lettre LXXIX, p. 219.

Francis remained unmoved by these threats, and quietly continued his preparations. He secured workmen for his purpose, and appointed a day on which the work of restoration at St Hippolytus and the erection of an altar were to begin. When these workmen expressed their fears of the undertaking, on account of the threats uttered by the Calvinists, the Provost engaged that, should there be any opposition, he would place himself at their head. On the day fixed for the beginning of the work, the Calvinists, roused by the leaders of the town, assembled in the public place opposite the church, armed with weapons and sticks, to prevent the workmen from entering the building. The Catholics, on their part, were not wanting in courage, and seizing their arms, came rushing forward to defend their friends. Just at the moment when open strife and bloodshed seemed inevitable, the Provost made his appearance between the combatants. He was a born leader of men, admirably fitted for meeting such a crisis. Showing not the slightest fear, he spoke to his adversaries with calm force and authority: though he was not prepared to yield one jot of his just rights, he showed such consideration for their feelings and displayed the reasonableness of his proceedings with such clearness, that, in spite of themselves, the Calvinists felt constrained to abandon their resistance and to retire. A few only of the most embittered amongst them lingered about the place, breathing threats and insults.† The syndics and councillors of the town had not been present up to this moment. Hearing, however, of the Provost's amazing influence over the crowd and of the prospect of his gaining his ends, they now hastened forward to oppose him with official power. "What are you doing here?" they exclaimed. "Why are you thus disturbing the public peace? By what right do you undertake the erection of an altar in this church? You surely know that by the treaty of Nyon our town was declared free, and that in consequence you cannot say Mass here without our consent." "Gentlemen," answered the Provost, "you have no concern whatever with what I am doing, for I am acting only in accordance with the will of His Highness. See here and read the powers granted to me, and take heed to what you are about to do, lest your heads answer for it." "You have taken advantage of His Highness," retorted the others. "The Prince cannot possibly intend to deprive us of our rights. In order that you shall make no further progress in the matter, we hereby make a formal protest against your proceedings." They immediately took steps to have this formal protest drawn up by the public notary. Francis suggested to them that in so doing they were making themselves liable to the charge of rebellion and of *lèse-majesté*. "All your opposition," he said, "will not cause me to put off for one moment the execution of my prince's orders. All that I can do for you is to give you an attestation that, in erecting an altar and in saying Mass here, I have no intention of derogating from your rights, if you have any such that are genuine. I am going to write to the Duke of Savoy. Write to him on your part, if such seems good to you, and we will abide by his reply."

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* Pérennès, l. iii, chap. i, p. 240. He quotes De Cambis, Tom. I, p. 202.

† Pérennès, l. iii, chap. i, p. 241.

The Syndics, influenced by the mingled firmness and moderation of the Provost's tone, gradually changed their attitude. They at length limited their pretensions to a demand that, as a sign of its being a temporary and provisory measure only, the altar to be erected should be constructed of wood and not of stone. For the sake of peace Francis thought fit to accede to this demand, and there for the moment the matter ended.

The Provost at once proceeded with the erection of the altar, and did his best, with the modest means at his disposal, to decorate the church. He supplied it with hangings, pictures, lamps and other ecclesiastical furniture, and at length had everything ready for Christmas night. It was an occasion of the greatest joy to his people and to himself. At midnight he said Mass, gave Communion, and preached with special inspiration to his faithful flock, who thus found a great reward for the trouble they had endured during the past months. Early in the morning he said the second Mass, and at the third, which was celebrated about nine o'clock, had the great consolation of seeing no less than six or seven hundred people present. Some of these had come especially for the occasion from beyond the Drance. From that day forward he offered his daily Mass in Thonon, and every Sunday and feast-day arranged that the holy Sacrifice was celebrated with all possible solemnity. In this last matter he was greatly assisted by the priests of the neighbourhood.

Having thus obtained this desire of his heart, he lost no time in writing to the Duke of Savoy to obtain the latter's approval of what had been done. Alluding to the erection of the altar, he wrote: "The Syndics of this town encountered it with opposition, which they afterwards withdrew. I do not know what foundation they have for such a proceeding, since we by no means violated the treaty of Nyon: and even if we had done so, it was not their business to intervene.* We forced no one."† Francis also wrote to the Nuncio to beg his support in the business.

The Duke's reply, dated from Turin on January 7, 1597, placed the Provost's position beyond all doubt. It was addressed to the "Reverend, dear, well-beloved and leal *Messire* Francis de Sales, Provost of St Peter of Geneva," and ran as follows: "In reply to the letter which you wrote to Us, We answer that We find it good that you have erected an altar in the church of St Hippolytus, as also the other good works which you are carrying on for the glory of God and the extirpation of heresy: and it displeases Us that you should have found any opposition, such as, according to the letter you have written to Us, you have nevertheless overcome. In which matter you will continue with all the skill and prudence which you can exercise. We have also written to the Sieur de Lambert that he has done well to aid the minister who desires to become a Catholic, according to your letter and his.

"Wherewith we pray God have you in his keeping.

"THE DUKE OF SAVOY, CHARLES EMMANUEL."‡

In addition to this letter the Duke also granted another petition of the Provost's. He sent Senator Favre as his special representative with orders to make known his will to the burghers of Thonon. This envoy, delighted to second in so effective a manner the work accomplished by his friend, assembled the principal citizens in the town hall and declared to them in an authoritative manner that His Highness took all the priests and Catholics of the country under his protection; that he intended the exercise of the Catholic religion to be publicly carried out in Thonon; that Mass was to be celebrated in the church of St Hippolytus; that sermons should be delivered there publicly, and that the occasion of these sermons should be announced by the sound of the great bell. This declaration produced the greatest effect, assuring those who desired to join the Catholic Church that they could so in safety, without fear of persecution on the part of the Calvinist section. About this time events so shaped themselves as to make it easy for Antoine Favre to see with his own eyes that the ducal decree was enforced. It chanced that a vacancy had occurred in the presidency of the Council of Genevois, and the Duke of Savoy, on the recommendation of the Duke of Nemours, had appointed Antoine Favre to this eminent dignity, allowing him at the same time to retain his rank and salary as Senator of Chambéry. This appointment necessitated that the famous lawyer should henceforth take up his abode at Annecy, where he was within comparatively easy distance of the Provost. Consequently the Senator often visited his friend, both to aid in the mission of Chablais and to seek advice as to his own affairs. For this great man had placed himself and the members of his family under the spiritual direction of the Saint, whose counsel he sought in all matters of religion and whose injunctions he obeyed with the simplicity of a child. The example set by this man of the world, and the height of sanctity which he attained under the direction of his friend, had no small influence in drawing many Calvinists into the Church.

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* The Saint insinuates that it was rather a matter which concerned the Bernese, with whom the treaty was made.

† N.E., Tom. XI, Lettre LXXX, p. 225.

‡ N.E., Tom. XI, p. 447.

The Provost was still further rejoiced to hear from the Nuncio that, thanks to the intervention of the Duke and of the Marquis de Lullin, the knights of SS Maurice and Lazarus had at last consented to the establishment of six parish priests, and engaged themselves to supply to each of these a modest annual subsidy. The distribution of these funds was placed in the hands of the Chevalier Bergera, who was to proceed with the business at once.

In the meanwhile Francis turned his attention to the accomplishment of a very difficult task that had been assigned to him by the Holy See. This was nothing less than to make an attempt to convert the celebrated Theodore de Beza, of Geneva. This distinguished man, who, though born a Catholic, had become the disciple and successor of Calvin himself, still exercised an enormous influence in the Protestant world. At this time he was seventy-seven years old, and though his age placed a restriction upon his activities, he was nevertheless a force to be reckoned with. The Sovereign Pontiff, touched by the thought of the danger to which the approach of death exposed this unhappy man, and moved by the consideration of the good that might be wrought by his conversion, had resolved to attempt his reconciliation with the Church. Yet the difficulties to be overcome were almost insuperable—the conquest of a man of manifest genius, idolized by thousands, sure of himself, subtle and resourceful in dispute, fixed in his present religious attitude by the professions and deeds of a lifetime, and held in the bonds of pride by the prominent and unique position which he held in the Protestant world. It was difficult to find a man who should seem to have even a chance of succeeding in so difficult a mission. At the time that the Pope was considering this matter there arrived in Rome the well-known Capuchin, Father Esprit of Beaume, who, on hearing from Clement VIII of his intentions with regard to Beza, at once suggested the Apostle of Chablais as the man most suitable for the task. The Holy Father at once accepted the suggestion, and, after having discussed the matter fully with Father Esprit, dispatched the latter to Thonon, as the bearer of a brief to Francis de Sales, with orders to explain to the Provost by word of mouth the difficult undertaking which the Pope willed to entrust to him. The brief ran as follows:

"Father Esprit, a religious of the Order of Capuchins, a preacher of the word of God, has given Us an account of your piety and zeal for the divine honour such as has filled Us with great joy. The same religious will unfold to you a certain matter which greatly pertains to the glory of God and which is very dear to Our heart. You will accept what he has to tell you as if it came from Our own lips, and you will devote to the matter that diligence for which we look from your wisdom and from your devotion towards Ourselves and this Holy See."*

Francis initiated this new undertaking by making it the subject of prayer. He also communicated the Holy Father's intention to his Bishop, to the Canons and to other virtuous priests and religious, in whose discretion he could trust, in order to obtain the help of their intercession. Nor did he minimize to himself the dangers of his task. If the reason of his intended visit to Geneva were made known to the citizens, there was every likelihood that his life would be in peril: for no Catholic was allowed to exercise the rights of his faith within the city walls. Another difficulty was to seize an opportunity when Beza should be alone. On several occasions, at the beginning of the year 1597, he made the journey to Geneva, but each time, on calling at Beza's house, he found a number of people engaged with the heresiarch. These journeys also revealed to him another of the dangers he had to undergo. He was obliged to reach his destination by crossing the lake of Geneva, and on more than one occasion was put in danger of drowning by the sudden storms that swept down upon the frail boat in which he had embarked. These occasions found him full of courage and never disturbed the tranquillity of his mind: with the name of Jesus on his lips, he resigned himself to God's will, knowing that whatever might happen to him while he was thus doing a duty, entrusted to him by Christ's Vicar, could only be for the best. Another result of these journeys was the discovery in Geneva of some five or six Catholics, who were obliged for various reasons to live in the city, and who were thus deprived of all the consolations of their religion. These people he helped as best he could, promising to bring them Holy Communion, so that they might at least fulfil their Easter duties.

Towards the end of January, 1597, the Provost happened to be at Annecy, whither in all probability he had gone to bless the marriage of his brother Gallois with Jeanne Martin-Dufresnoy de Loysin, when he learned that the Chevalier Bergera had just arrived at Thonon, in order to collect the revenues of his Order and to arrange for the salaries of the parish priests. He therefore returned in all haste. In addition to the object for which he had come, there was another important matter awaiting him. This was the abjuration of Pierre Fournier, who three years previously had been the first Syndic of the town. Considering that every publicity ought to be given to the reconciliation of a man invested with public authority, the Provost gave notice of the ceremony several days beforehand, and invited to it as many persons as he could. On the day fixed for the occasion, February 4, he set out for the church of St Hippolytus, holding the Syndic by the hand and accompanied by a crowd of Catholics. As they proceeded on their way, they were suddenly met by a mob of angry Protestants, who greeted the procession with a shower of stones, and wounded a number of the Catholics. The latter, angered by this unprovoked assault, were about to retaliate in kind, when the Provost, turning towards them, forbade them to engage in hostilities and urged them to take no notice of the attack. Obedient to his word, they went on their way in silence. As soon as they were all safely within the church, the Provost turned back to the threshold of the building, and faced the angry mob that had followed them. Once again, as on a previous occasion, his calm courage was master of the situation: he was able to find words to pacify the resentment of the crowd and to prevent any further demonstration.* This being effectually accomplished, the ceremony took place in the midst of peace and recollection. The example given by Fournier was soon followed by the greater part of the parishioners of Brens, and, in the bailiwick of Ternier, by the inhabitants of St Julien.

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* E.N., Tom. XI, p. 453.

The Provost, however, was destined in a short time to endure another storm. On February 19, Ash Wednesday, he inaugurated the season of Lent with the customary blessing and imposition of ashes, and preached a sermon on the necessity of good works—one of the bitterest subjects of dispute between the two religions at that time. This ceremony provoked the criticisms and mockery of the Calvinists. They discussed the matter heatedly during the day and the morrow: they considered the thing to be an absurd practice, idolatrous, intolerable, and a shame to the whole country. Little by little the excitement increased, and the more hot-headed gained an ascendancy amongst the zealots for the reformed religion. On the following Friday, as Francis was passing down one of the streets, he was surprised to find himself attacked and seized by an angry crowd of Calvinists. Happily for him, they were not in accord as to the most fitting method of procedure. Some wanted to take him to prison and lock him up as a madman, who, they said, had carried his insanity so far as to bless ashes and spread them on the heads of his co-religionists: others wished to proceed to the prompter and more drastic course of stoning him as a malefactor. In the heat of their controversy they seem to have forgotten their victim. Francis, noticing close to him a doorway underneath a staircase, seized his opportunity. He promptly darted through this opening, crying out, "In God's keeping," and succeeded in making his escape.

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* C. A. de S., p. 171.

About this time the Provost was carrying on a continual correspondence with the Duke, the papal Nuncio and the Knights of SS Maurice and Lazarus. These letters treated mainly of the mission of Chablais and matters related thereto, such as a further request for help for the minister who was being instructed; an approval of a conference between Father Chérubin and a Calvinistic minister, which was to have been held at Geneva, but which fell through for the usual reason; a request that Father Chérubin and Father Esprit should be sent to preach in Chablais, and, if possible, two Jesuit fathers; a further discussion of the Roman legacy, in which matter he seems to have been successful. We also learn that he had found a number of priests willing to take up parishes in Chablais, and that he hoped soon to place four of them. The money question, however, was still urgent. The country was in an impoverished condition; "for the rest," he writes, "there is neither church restored nor altar erected: we have not even chalices, missals and the other furniture indispensable for the six parishes."* The knights were evidently giving him trouble. As the best means of solving the difficulties between him and these gentlemen, he suggested that they should give up all the benefices in Chablais: it must be remembered that this request was perfectly just, inasmuch as the benefices were ecclesiastical and only held temporarily by the knights as a protective measure, with the stipulated condition that they should eventually be restored for the support of religion. M. Bergera, as the Provost wrote in his letters, showed the best disposition and perfect willingness to do all in his power, but other members of the Order were hostile. They tried to evade the obligations under which they lay, and even when payment of money had been agreed upon and demand made of them by M. Bergera, they were slow in making delivery. They seem also to have requested that, even if they gave up the benefices, they should still retain the patronage: to this Francis was very much opposed, as it would abolish the election *concursus* for these parishes and often result in the appointment of unsuitable priests. Another matter which was more and more attracting his attention was the need of reform in several of the religious houses, notably in those of Aulps and Abondance. In one of his letters to the Nuncio he tactfully combats that common fault of the Roman government—over-centralization, and pleads that greater liberty be left to the Ordinary of the diocese. "I will frankly give you my opinion," he wrote. "His Holiness could not do better than to leave all authority and liberty of action in this matter, and in others like it, to Your Lordship and to our Bishop, since this war must be directed by the eye and not by the ear: for very often opportunities present themselves only to disappear without hope of return for those who do not know how to seize them. This is put forward on my part in a spirit of humblest obedience."* In the midst of his numerous disappointments at this time he had two subjects of consolation. On the third Sunday of Lent he visited for the first time the parish of Cervans, three miles distant from Allinges: here he met with a most encouraging reception, and found so many people anxious for the return of the Catholic faith that he resolved to make it one of the six parishes. By March 16 he was able to inform the Nuncio that he had appointed a priest to take charge of this district.† The second encouraging event was a promise on the part of the religious of Ainay, of Lyons, to contribute an annuity for a seventh parish on account of a priory benefice which they possessed in Chablais. As to Thonon, the opposition of the ruling burghers was still carried on relentlessly and gave him endless trouble. Their latest tactics had been an attack upon M. d'Avully, whom they wished to deprive of his position as judge in their consistory. The Baron opposed their intention: he urged that the consistory was only established for the correction of vice, and that his conversion to Catholicism had deprived him neither of his zeal nor of his judgement, but on the contrary had greatly increased them both.‡ Francis pleaded his cause in letters both to the Duke and the Nuncio.

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* N.E., Tom. XI, p. 243.

During the last weeks of Lent the Provost gave himself up with zeal to his pastoral work. In addition to his correspondence and administrative labours he went about the neighbourhood visiting his country people and preparing them for Easter. He was also engaged in continual instructions at Thonon, on behalf of his neophytes and Catholics, with the same object in view. The last three days he devoted to the care of Count Martinengo's soldiers, who had been sent to the town to form a garrison there. This continual labour of preaching and hearing confessions was not without a bad effect upon his health, and he had to confess in one of his letters that he was suffering somewhat from fever. Nevertheless, he abated none of his zeal on that account.

An incident related by his biographers gives us a picture of the difficulties he had to encounter not merely from sin and laxity of morals, but from false rigorism born of an ignorance that was only too common. One of the soldiers had in a moment of forgetfulness received Holy Communion after having broken his fast. It was done through sheer inadvertence and was, of course, no sin at all, except what might possibly be ascribed to negligence. Yet the man's serjeant and companions reproached him with such bitterness that he was in the greatest danger of falling into despair. The very men who had provoked this state of affairs became at last so alarmed at their companion's condition that they advised him to seek out " the good father." Francis, on seeing the man in such a state of woe, received him with every kindness, and gradually won from him the cause of his grief. On learning from the soldier that his fault against the Church's discipline had been committed out of forgetfulness, the Provost had no difficulty in consoling him. " My son," he said, " God has already pardoned you. Go in peace, and do not for the sake of a small fault of carelessness fall into a grievous sin of despair." After bidding him recite an *Our Father* and *Hail Mary* as a penance by way of still further easing his mind, the Saint dismissed him in peace.*

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* N.E., Tom. XI, p. 259.

† E.N., Tom. XI, Lettres LXXXVII and LXXXIX.

‡ Lettre LXXXVII.

As soon as Easter was over, Francis determined to make another effort to interview Beza. Accordingly, accompanied by Canon Louis de Sales and Georges Rolland, he set out on the Tuesday in Easter week, April 8, for Geneva, where he took lodging at the sign of the *Ecu de France*. Soon after his arrival a servant came to his room and told him that, being a Catholic, she desired to speak to him. This was Jacqueline Coste, who afterwards became a religious in the Order of the Visitation. After spending her first years as a shepherdess in her native village, she had passed into the service of a rich Calvinist of Geneva, who had done all that he could to make her change her religion. She had, however, remained true to her faith, and, what is more, had always managed to hear Mass on Sundays and feast-days at Sacconay in the neighbourhood of Geneva. Finally, having left her former master, she had obtained a place at the inn where she now lived, in order to be of assistance to the Catholics, and especially to the priests and religious who, in passing through Geneva, seem to have made use of the hospitality of the *Ecu de France*. " Ah, sir," she went on, " for a long time I have asked our Lord for the grace to be able to speak to you: for from the moment that I had the happiness of hearing you defend the Catholic doctrine in the Place du Moulard against the minister La Faye and convicting him of error, God has never ceased whispering in my heart that from your charity I am to learn the way of salvation. For the rest, have no fear about me: by the grace of God I am a Catholic, I have been one all my life, and it is my will to remain so till my death." The Saint, full of admiration for the candour and strength of this lonely soul, confirmed her in her good dispositions and gave her advice as to how she was to practise her religion. Then, having heard her confession, he told her he was going to give her Holy Communion. This was rendered possible by the fact that he brought with him on his journey the silver pyx he had had constructed for his mission at Thonon, and in which he carried at that moment five hosts, destined for the Easter Communion of some Catholics in Geneva. The servant, in her ingenuousness, asked him how he could give her Holy Communion without the assistance of a server. "Do not trouble yourself about that, my child," he answered. "Our angels, who are present with us, will serve as clerks, for it is their office to wait upon the adorable presence of our Lord Jesus Christ. But I shall only be able to give you half a host, because I have only brought five for five good Catholics of this town, to whom I have promised Holy Communion: but with half a host you will receive no less than with a whole one, since each fragment of a host contains your Creator and Redeemer, whole and entire, with all his treasures and all the merits of his sacred Passion."*

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* Ç. A. de S., l. iii, p. 173.

As soon as he could, the Provost made his way to the residence of Beza, and this time had the good fortune to find that much-sought man alone.† After greeting him with courtesy, Francis went on to make himself known to the old man, and for a time continued to talk with him upon various indifferent matters. Then, when Beza had introduced him into a more retired apartment, he broached the subject of his visit. "Sir," he said, "my life has not been passed in such retirement that I have not heard of your learning and eloquence: but I have also heard you greatly praised for what I now experience myself—namely, the courtesy with which you treat those who do themselves the honour of seeking your conversation. It is this which has inspired me to take the liberty of coming to see you, to introduce myself to you, and to reveal to you the most secret thoughts of my heart. Young as I am, I have had for some time the greatest desire to confer with you; I hope that you will accede to my wish and will not refuse to tell me your opinion upon the matters which I have resolved to put before you. Moreover, I take leave to say that if you will look well at me, you will see that I am not the kind of man who would lay a trap for you, and that I am dealing with you openly and above board." The minister, astonished at these words and unable to guess their import, remained for some moments without answering: finally he replied: “ Sir, you are putting me under obligation by your courtesy, and are acting towards me in the way I have always wished that people should do: for I esteem nothing so much as candour and sincerity. Moreover, I will try and satisfy you in regard to your questions, according to the limits of my mind and the experience I have acquired during the course of such long years. Let us see now what it is you want of me.” Francis immediately answered him with this one question—“ Sir, can one save one’s soul in the Church of Rome?”

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* Pérennès (l. iii, chap. viii, p. 260), quoting *Vie de Jacqueline Coste*, chap. v; also the *Année*, Avril 10.

† There are considerable variations in the different biographers' versions of the conversations with Beza. Absolute fidelity to the original is not, therefore, possible.

This was the question which had already been put to the Calvinist ministers of France by Henry of Navarre, and from the answer to which he had drawn the only logical and practical conclusion. It had been put by a Duke of Brunswick with a similar result. To the Protestants of to-day it might seem to offer no insuperable difficulty: but to the Calvinist of those times it presented a very troublesome dilemma. For, like the Catholic, he then maintained the old teaching that out of the Church there was no salvation, though he differed as to that Church’s identity. If Beza were to answer this question in the negative, then he would at once be obliged to admit that for some time before the advent of Luther and Calvin, the Church had ceased to exist, since the only churches that did exist were the Roman and Eastern Churches, with whose doctrine he was at variance. If the Church had at any time ceased to exist, then the promises of Christ had failed, and this supposition struck ruthlessly at that very divinity of Jesus of Nazareth upon which the whole Christian economy was necessarily founded. If Beza answered in the affirmative, then he admitted that the Roman Church was the true Church of Christ, since out of the Church there was no salvation. Naturally, the poor man was embarrassed. He remained for some time in silence, with his eyes fixed upon a corner of the room. Then turning to Francis, he said, “ You must allow me a few moments’ thought before attempting to satisfy you.” He passed quickly into his study, while the Provost picked up a book, to while away the time of waiting. What was passing in Beza’s mind it was impossible to conjecture. That he was much disturbed in some way or other could be guessed from the sound of his footsteps alternating with abrupt periods of silence, as of a man striving to reflect, yet driven restless by some trouble in his mind. Was it vexation at finding a solution difficult or was it possibly remorse? For a quarter of an hour Francis waited before Beza made his reappearance with apologies for such a delay. “ Sir,” said the old man, “ I am going to open my heart to you with the same frankness with which it has pleased you to show me yours. You have asked me if one can save one’s soul in the Roman Church. I reply to you certainly in the affirmative. It is so without a doubt, and one cannot deny that the Roman Church is the Mother Church.”

"You have answered aright," replied the Provost. "But if it is so, and if eternal salvation lies within the Roman Church, why have you planted your pretended Reform—as, for instance, in France——with so many wars, with the sacking of towns, with ruin, arson, and sedition, with rapine and murder, with the utter destruction of churches and other innumerable evils?"*

Beza seemed startled at this sudden accusation. Looking back upon the past, he cannot in his old age have held himself altogether blameless for his share in the turbulence of the Swiss reformers, in the countless intrigues of Geneva against every Catholic power, perhaps, even, in the cold, cruel severities of Calvin himself. Hideous cruelties had been perpetrated on either side in the name of religion, and the leaders of each party must surely at times have experienced remorse on seeing the consequences of their teaching and diplomacy. Was Beza in this matter in any surer position than others of his contemporaries? Was it not possible that the words of this earnest young stranger may have awakened in his conscience the pain of memories that he had long striven to stifle? Certain it is that at the moment he showed every sign of distress. Once more he remained silent for a while. At length, with a deep sigh, he tremblingly answered: "I do not wish to deny that you can obtain salvation in your religion. But there exists this misfortune—that you entangle souls in too many ceremonies and difficulties. You say, for instance, that good works are necessary for salvation, whereas these are simply a matter of suitability or congruity. From this there arise many evils. For, because of your preaching, people believe in the necessity of good works: and because, as often as not, they fail to do them, they damn themselves miserably by acting against their conscience. That is why, in order to remedy these evils, we have striven to establish our religion in which the way to heaven is made easy to the faithful: for we hold this as the base and principle of our religion, that faith saves without works, and that good works are not necessary to salvation, but only possess, as I have already told you, a certain congruity." "Nay, but have you no fear," replied the Saint, "lest, in rejecting good works, you fall into a labyrinth from which you will find the greatest difficulty in withdrawing yourselves. For I beg you to notice, sir, that to deny the necessity of good works for salvation can be nought but the upsetting of all those laws, human, natural and divine, which menace offenders with bitter punishment and promise eternal laurels to those who observe them. Nay, but can you ignore the reason for which our Lord Jesus Christ, as related in St Matthew's Gospel, teaching the Apostles what he wanted them to believe about the Last Judgement, makes no mention of sins committed, but says only that he will condemn the accursed because they have not done good works. Here are his words: 'Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me not to eat: I was thirsty, and you gave me not to drink. I was a stranger, and you took me not in: naked, and you covered me not: sick and in prison, and you did not visit me.' Do you not see for yourself that the omission of good works results in damnation? If they were merely suitable or congruous, as you say, do you think that those who have not done them will be punished with so stern a penalty? As for me, I await your solution of this difficulty, unless perhaps you find yourself of the same opinion as I am."*

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* C. A. de S., l. iii, p. 157.

At these words Beza, who ordinarily affected a somewhat studied dignity of bearing, lost control of himself. Flushed with anger, he broke out into a torrent of abuse against the Papists and their doctrine. Francis listened to him calmly, with that control over his temper which long practice had made almost a second habit with him. Then he replied with courtesy: "Sir, I did not come here to vex you. God forbid. I have come simply to confer with you on several points of controversy, and to put before you frankly and in good faith my poor objections. I was pleased to be able to obtain from you your opinion thereon. But since I see that you are vexed and angry, I beg you to excuse me. It shall not happen again through my fault, and I will never again discuss any matter of controversy with you." Beza immediately realized that he was at fault. It is a testimony to the bigness of his character that he promptly did the right thing. He recalled himself to his accustomed calm and apologized for his want of civility, explaining that his zeal for his religion had betrayed him, and that a man had not always full power to resist his first impulse. Finally, he begged the Provost to come and see him often, with the assurance that he would take it as a great favour and would be glad to receive his new acquaintance, provided that he was not hindered from doing so by the multiplicity of important affairs that so often beset him. With that the interview ended.†

In the meantime this long conversation had aroused the curiosity and suspicions of Beza's attendants and of several people who had been waiting to see him. Rumours of what had happened passed from the house to those outside: before long a report was circulated that a dangerous and insidious person had gained entrance into the city, and that it behoved people to be on their guard. These rumours against himself seem to have reached the Provost's ears, but he took no notice of them. Having been informed by a soldier from Allinges, whom he met in the street, that a certain Catholic lay dangerously ill in the house of a Protestant, named Abraham Joly, he at once hastened to the address, in order to give the sick man the consolations

* C. A. de S., l. iii, p. 158.

† C. A. de S., l. iii, p. 159.

of religion. It was in vain that he was warned that he ran the risk of losing his life, that the Genevans would not tolerate the exercise of the Roman faith in their city, that, if they discovered him, he would be placed in a position of the greatest peril: all such considerations were overborne by the fear of allowing a Catholic to die without the last sacraments. When he arrived at the house, he obtained admission to the bedside of the sick man, and exerted himself to console the latter in his sufferings with words of sympathy and kindness. Then, turning to those who were in the room, he asked them to leave him alone a short time with the invalid, as he wished to confer with him in private. Although these people were all Calvinists, and although they must have suspected his priestly character, yet they were so impressed by his kindly bearing and by the joy of the sick man on seeing him, that they obeyed him at once without ever thinking of troubling him in his ministrations or reporting the matter to the civic authorities. Left thus at liberty, the Provost prepared the Catholic, who was evidently in a sinking condition, for his death, heard his confession, gave him Viaticum, and strengthened his courage with words on the Divine mercy and compassion.

The morrow was spent in looking after the spiritual interests of the five Catholics whom he had discovered in the city on his former visits. He heard their confessions and gave them their Easter Communion, with whatever religious instruction their surroundings and his own lack of time permitted. The next day he quitted the city. As he did so, the thought of the change that had come upon the place during recent years, the memory of the ancient days when Catholicism had flourished within its walls, moved him so deeply that he could not restrain his tears. His cousin, Louis de Sales, noticing his grief, asked him to reveal what was thus troubling him. "Ah, my dear brother," he answered, "our Saviour wept over the ingratitude of Jerusalem: how, then, can I help crying over this poor Geneva of ours, that once was the see of our Bishop, and is now separated from the pale of the Church!" Then, thinking of the Blessed Sacrament, which he had carried within the city precincts, he added: "It has had no knowledge of the time of God's visitation!"*

On leaving Geneva Francis went on to Sales, where he intended to stay a few weeks partly for the sake of rest and partly in order to attend the diocesan synod, which was to be held about the middle of the month. From here he wrote to the Nuncio about matters which had already been the subject of correspondence. One of these was the reform of the abbeys of Aulps and Abondance. Having himself striven in vain to bring them back to a sense of their obligations, Francis was now laying complaints before the Holy See by the intermediary of the Nuncio as well as before the Duke of Savoy and the

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* *Année de S. F. de S.*, Avril 10.

Senate of Chambéry. The Abbot of Abondance, alarmed at the consequences which might ensue from these denunciations, hastened to send both to the Duke and the Nuncio a defence of his community, full of praise for its religious zeal and of bitter criticism against the Provost, whom he accused of duplicity. Francis, as we have seen, had so perfected himself in the virtue of meekness, that as a rule he took no notice of personal affronts: he knew, however, that on certain occasions it was necessary to be firm and to defend the dignity of his office. It would appear that the Abbot, in the course of his defence, had striven to undermine the influence of his accuser by a jibe against the Provost as a native of Savoy. In a later letter to the Nuncio Francis writes: "As to the opinion which the Lord Abbot chooses to proffer so gratuitously to your Lordship—that it is not wise, as a general rule, to put trust in a Savoyard—I regard it as an impertinence which merits no reply."* The Duke and the Nuncio were not deceived by the speciousness of the Abbot's defence. Charles Emmanuel decided that, while measures of reform were being formulated, the Abbey should contribute to the general good of religion by maintaining a preacher at Evian and by bestowing every year a substantial alms upon the Poor Clares of that town, who were often in the direst want of the necessities of life.

On April 21 Francis, who was then at Annecy, addressed to Pope Clement VIII a report of his interview with Beza. After reminding His Holiness of the events which led up to his action in the matter, he relates how eventually he obtained access to the heresiarch on the Wednesday in Easter week, and found him at first fairly easy of approach. "But when," continues the Saint, "I finally withdrew, after having tried every means to ascertain his convictions and after having left no stone unturned, as far as in me lay, I found in him *a heart of stone*, unmoved up to the present, or certainly by no means moved in the right direction, that is to say, a heart *grown old in evil days*. However, as far as I can conjecture from his words, this would be my judgement of his case: if in a short time it were possible to gain more frequent and safer access to him, he might perhaps be brought back to the fold of the Lord. But in the case of a man of eighty years there is danger in delay."†

Having completed this report of his interview with Beza, the Provost goes on to put before the Pope another matter that concerned him greatly at this time.

"Encouraged by your great kindness, I feel it my duty to inform you that the people, hitherto heretical, who surround Geneva on every side, belonging to what are called the bailiwicks of Gex and Ternier, most humbly demand the restoration of the Catholic faith and worship, in order that henceforth they may live as Catholics.

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* E.N., Tom. XI, p. 294.

† E.N., Tom. XI, p. 270.

I have myself received complaints from many amongst these people, who actually happen to be Catholics, that they are prohibited from enjoying the worship of their own religion by the tyranny of the Genevan Republic. Moreover, the Republic claims to exercise this ruthless policy not only in its own name, but in that of the most Christian King of France. It is not likely that the King, who so recently and with such earnestness has sought and obtained his admission to the Catholic Communion, is aware of the tyranny by which Catholic consciences are oppressed. Wherefore, I feel sure that if the King himself were informed of this matter by the Holy See, things would be arranged in a much more favourable manner."

He also suggested in this letter that the King's influence might be obtained to secure a greater liberty of conscience in Geneva itself.

To this letter the Holy Father made a reply in which, after praising the Provost's zeal, he exhorted the latter to make still further efforts in the matter: he also promised to make representation to the King of France on behalf of the people of Gex and Ternier.

During his stay at Annecy, Francis, instead of taking the rest he needed so much, was soon busy in forwarding several important matters that came to hand. He had several interviews with Father Chérubin, who had just preached a course of Lenten sermons in the town and who, during the winter, had been successfully engaged in missionary work in the neighbourhood of Annemasse. Learning that the Father had accepted the offer of a public dispute with Calvinist ministers in Geneva itself, the Provost immediately wrote to the Nuncio for the necessary authorization. His greatest preoccupation, however, was to find priests and money for the prosecution of his work in Chablais. Had he been in possession of the one, he might have found less difficulty in procuring the other: unfortunately he still found himself almost totally without funds. The Knights of SS Maurice and Lazarus, unfaithful to their promises, had only delivered to him the contemptible sum of 100 florins and thirty measures of corn.* Consequently the Provost was disappointed in his hopes of taking back with him a number of priests to work on the mission. He succeeded, however, in persuading Father Esprit of Beaume, the Capuchin, to return with him to Thonon.

It was not long before the good Franciscan, urged on by his impetuous zeal, opened up his campaign against the Calvinists. Having attended one of Viret's sermons, the friar waited for the minister outside the Church, and on seeing him, asked him for the proofs of what he had just been preaching. Viret, as we have seen, was a somewhat tempestuous person, and he promptly gave answer with more violence than logic. The friar's retort as to the ineffectiveness of such a system of argument only drew forth another tirade of invective. Meanwhile the crowd began to intervene. One of the bystanders, taking the minister by the arm, drew him away from the conflict: others turned their attention to Father Esprit and abused him. Several of the women began to throw stones, crying out: "Down with the Papist." At this moment, fortunately, Francis made his appearance and addressed the people. He spoke in a conciliatory manner for the most part, but took occasion to remind the people that the Catholic preachers were present in the town by the will of the Duke of Savoy, and that those people who offered the missioners violence were likely to incur their Prince's displeasure. In one way and another he succeeded in calming the uproar, and the people went quietly homewards. The Provost took the opportunity of suggesting to Father Esprit that it would be well at the present stage to avoid all public provocation, and that a little prudence was necessary in order to get the best results from zeal. In order that there should be no misunderstanding about this incident at headquarters, Francis took the precautionary measure of sending an account of it both to the Duke and the Nuncio.

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* The measure used (*une coupe*) was equivalent to about 79 litres.

Soon after this he received news that his Bishop was dangerously ill and desired to see him. He set out for Annecy in obedience to this order, and having arrived there, sent Canon Rogès to Thonon, to take his place. Mgr. de Granier's sickness, though serious, was not beyond hope, and he eventually recovered. He had just received a brief from the Holy Father, who, answering a request for the authorization of a public conference at Geneva, left the decision of the matter in the Bishop's hands. Father Chérubin, who was designated as the Catholic champion, was immediately sent for, and a letter accepting the conference was carried to Geneva by Canon de Sales. The project was never carried out. While the Syndics of the city were quite willing to authorize the controversy, the ministers demanded a delay, and eventually refused to go further in the matter. What the real reason for this refusal was it is difficult to say, but an amusing passage in one of the Saint's letters seems to infer that indiscreet gossip at Turin, which had reached the ears of the Genevans, had aroused their distrust in some way. "What I regret beyond belief," he writes, "is that this business has been bruited abroad very loudly by our Court, whose discretion would suffice to reveal the mysterious secrets of the Apocalypse: and we have to deal with creatures to whom the slightest noise is suspect."*

In one of the Provost's letters to the Nuncio he informs the latter, that, acting upon the advice of his friends, he had made up his mind to compete for the parish of Petit-Bornand, the incumbent of which had recently died. He also suggested that, as he was absent so often from Annecy, it might be a good thing if he resigned the Provostship, though he desired to retain his Canonry. His reason for this last is characteristic: in his own words it is "in order that when I come here I may have a place in the choir; for the Offices are celebrated so worthily that to attend them is one of my greatest consolations."* His suggestion as to the Provostship had no further sequel. As the *concursus* for the benefice of Petit-Bornand was not to be held until June 30, he went back to Chablais, where he found himself able to instal priests in the parishes of Brens and Bernex.

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* N.E., Tom. XI, Lettre XCIV, p. 275.

It was probably about this time that a minister named Galletier visited the Saint. This incident, with its sequel, is thus related by Charles Auguste de Sales. "Galletier, a minister of the country of Vaud, under the tyranny of the Canton of Berne, having crossed the lake, came to Thonon: and after having made acquaintance with the doctrine and sincere piety of Provost de Sales, openly acknowledged the truth and sincerity of the Roman religion, and went back with a better opinion thereof than he had held in his coming. But the Bernese, having perceived that since this conference he was shaken in his belief of their religion, brought him quickly to trial, and condemned him to death."†

On June 23 the Provost received another brief from Pope Clement VIII directing him to make a second attempt to convert Beza to the faith of his baptism. Before executing these orders, Francis presented himself as a candidate at the *concursus* for the benefice of Petit-Bornand. He answered the questions of the examiners in his usual brilliant manner, and was appointed administrator of the benefice, until the will of the Holy Father, to whom the nomination of this benefice was reserved, could be ascertained. Unfortunately it turned out that Nicholas Bally, brother of the late parish priest, had gone to Rome bearing with him a deed in the dead curé's name, resigning the benefice to him, and had succeeded in gaining the Pope's approval of his application. This was a bitter disappointment to Francis, who had hoped to use the revenues of the benefice in furthering the missionary work of Chablais: but he was getting used to such disappointments by this time, and so, leaving the final settlement of this unfortunate affair in the hands of Providence, he set out for Geneva, accompanied by President Favre and Georges Rolland.

On arriving at Beza's house the two friends were shown into a reception room until the minister was free to come to them. On the walls of this room hung a picture of Calvin, beneath which was written the following inscription:

Hoc vultu, hoc habitu Calvinum sacra docentem
    Geneva felix audiit,
Cujus scripta piis toto celebrantur in orbe,
    Malis licet ringentibus.

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* N.E., Tom. XI, pp. 297-8.

† C. A., l. iii, p. 183.

(" This is the true portrait of Calvin, from whom Geneva had the happiness of hearing the true doctrine, and whose writings are the admiration of devout men throughout the world in spite of the rage of the wicked.")

During the time of their waiting Francis and his friend occupied themselves with devising an alteration of the verse, such as would faithfully represent the Catholic view of the famous Reformer. This they did by the mental alteration of three words. When Beza appeared Francis turned towards him and, pointing to the inscription, smilingly remarked, " While we were awaiting the honour of seeing you, sir, we were considering the beauty of your poetry and admiring its style and rhythm. But allow me to say that, in order to make it conformable with the truth and worthy of eternal memory, you should re-write these four lines, in letters of gold, modified by the change of only three words; thus:

> Hoc vultu, hoc habitu Calvinum *falsa* docentem
> Geneva *demens* audiit,
> Cujus scripta piis toto *damnantur* in orbe
> Malis licet ringentibus.

The meaning of the altered verses would thus become: " This is the portrait of Calvin from whom Geneva had the *misfortune* of hearing *false* doctrine, and whose writings are the *execration* of devout men throughout the world, in spite of the rage of the wicked."

The thing was said with such a graceful combination of frankness and good humour that Beza felt no inclination to take offence. Francis then introduced his companion, and Beza, after having expressed his pleasure at making the acquaintance of so distinguished a man, entered upon a long conversation with the President on various subjects of a secular nature. This was not at all what the Provost desired. While casting about in his mind for some means of introducing the real business of his visit, he noticed a pile of books heaped up in a corner and covered with dust. Turning towards Beza, he asked him what these big tomes happened to be. The minister, shaking his head in token of his contempt, replied " They are the writings of the ancient fathers, on which, to tell you the truth, I set very little store." " For my part," answered the Provost, " I value them beyond all telling." Picking up the first book that came to hand, he opened it: it was a volume of St Augustine, and from it he read out a passage in which the famous African doctor says that grace in its action upon man leaves him full liberty of will. " It is very difficult to understand," said Beza, " that man can make a single movement without being impelled thereto by the Holy Spirit." This was tantamount to saying that the Holy Spirit inclines the will to evil as much as to good, that God is the real author of all human action, and that man is naught but a machine. It was the doctrine of the leaders of Calvinism, who denied free will. Francis, in order to combat this doctrine, had recourse to a simile, which at first sight might have seemed dangerous to use, but which by his skilful handling, served his purpose well. " A clockmaker," he said, " makes a watch according to the rules of his art: then he sets it to the correct time and winds it up, to make it go. After that the watch, as if by its own will, and by a movement natural to it, runs through the course of the hours by virtue of a power which was given to it from the beginning. In the same way, when the soul of a sinner has been inclined by the Holy Spirit to contrition of heart, it must, in order to be justified, co-operate with that first impulse: and then, still continuing to co-operate with grace, must pass through the other stages of justification." Beza, manifestly struck by the simile, was listening with close attention. The Provost, mindful of the proverb that every comparison halts,* and fearing lest the minister should draw a wrong deduction from his simile, went on to make the necessary distinction. " But there is an infinite difference between God and the clockmaker. The clockmaker necessitates the movements of his watch by the springs which drive it, in such a way that it has no choice of going or not going: but God, in the work of our justification, makes no use of a necessarily obliging force; his grace does not deprive us of our liberty; it urges, it attracts our will, but it does not interfere with the freedom of that will. We still have it in our power to accept or reject the influence of his action: and while his influence gently bestows upon us a power, his very gentleness leaves us in full possession of our will. *I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore I have drawn thee, taking pity*, says God, through the words of Jeremias. God draws us, therefore: he uses no violence. *If thou didst know the gift of God, and who he is that saith to thee, Give me to drink, thou perhaps wouldst have asked of him*, said Jesus to the Samaritan woman, as if he had said: ' Thou couldst have asked, but thou wert free to do it or not to do it.' You cannot doubt, sir, that this is the sense which St Augustine gives to the words of Jesus Christ. To say, therefore, that man is not free to accept or to refuse grace is to contradict Scripture, the ancient Fathers and experience itself. The Council of Trent has rightly branded this doctrine with its anathema. Do not, then, utter such a blasphemy, sir: it is equivalent to accusing God of being the cause of the loss of the wicked, and, just as we should insult his liberality towards the just if we were not to recognize the grace which makes them do good, so also we blaspheme against his goodness towards sinners if we say that he refuses them the succour which they need."

Francis then brought the conversation back to the question which they had already discussed in their first interview, concerning the Roman Church. Beza repeated his assertion that, though men could save their souls in that communion, because it was the Mother Church, nevertheless the Protestant Church was equally the true Church, with this advantage over the other that it made the path to heaven easier by means of its doctrine on good works. " I cannot believe, sir," replied Francis, " that a man as well read in the Scriptures and the fathers as yourself, believes, in the bottom of his heart, that good works are not obligatory, as if St Paul had not said that *God will render to every man according to his works*, or as if a sophism could shelter you against the terrible threats of Jesus Christ against those who shall not have done good works." " Alas, sir," said Beza, with a deep sigh, " if I am not upon the right path, I pray God every day that in his mercy he will bring me back to it." And he repeated this protestation several times. Francis, seeing that he was not likely to obtain any further concession from the old man at that time, withdrew. The minister, having accompanied him to the door, gripped him affectionately by the hand, repeating the words he had just uttered with such strength that they were heard by all those who were in the next room.*

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* Omnis comparatio claudat.

Encouraged by this partial success, the Provost managed to obtain a third interview with the old man. This was not without danger, as the Genevans were becoming suspicious as to his influence over their aged minister. It was represented to the Provost that he would spend his time to more profit by devoting himself to souls who were better disposed towards the faith than was this obstinate heresiarch. " Do you not remember," said Francis in reply, " that Jesus, our Master, said that he had not come into the world for the just but for sinners; that, according to St Paul, the most consoling word that ever came down from heaven was this—that God descended on this earth to save sinners ? If we are to imitate our Master and seek after sinners, why should I not do for Beza everything that a minister of Jesus Christ can do ? He is a sheep that is lost. Ought I not to strive to save him from the jaws of the wolf and to bring him back to the fold ?"†

To Geneva, therefore, the Provost returned once more, and was again received by Beza. As soon as the first words of civility were over, Francis hastened to speak of the main object of this third visit. " Sir," he said, " I have not come to dispute with you but to talk with you frankly about the most important business that you can have in the world. Your mind, it seems to me, is very disturbed, and since you recognize that the Catholic Church is the Mother Church, you must have a great desire to return to that veritable Mother who once nourished you with the milk of her doctrine. It may be that you are held back by the fear that, should you do so, the means of living in that comfort which your age necessitates would fail you. Do not let this consideration hold you back. I am directed to offer you, on behalf of the Pope, an annual pension of 4,000 golden crowns, and to promise you, moreover, that the loss of your furniture shall be redeemed at double the price of your own valuation." On hearing this proposal, Beza remained a long time without saying a word, his eyes fixed upon the ground. "Ah, sir," continued Francis, with all the appeal in his voice that sprang from the strong charity within him, "why do you hesitate any longer to surrender to the call of truth? Take advantage of this opportunity which the goodness of God is offering to you. Do honour to your grey hairs by a sincere return to the Roman Church and make a generous effort to ensure the certainty of your eternal salvation."*

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* Hamon, l. ii, chap. iv; Pérennès, l. iii, chap. ii, p. 277. The latter quotes Abbé de Baudry as authority. See also C. A. de S., l. iii, p. 180.

† Pérennès, l. iii, chap. xii, p. 285, quoting Father Etienne Binet, S.J

But Beza found himself unable to make that effort. He repeated again that, while he recognized the Roman Church as the Mother Church, he did not despair of obtaining his salvation in the Protestant communion. Nor could Francis obtain any other answer from him. It was the last of his interviews with Beza. He afterwards made further attempts to have word with the old Calvinist, but found that the undertaking had become impossible. The suspicions of the Genevans had become a certainty, and they promptly took measures to prevent any further intercourse between the two men. Beza lived on for some years.†

There is a certain amount of evidence to show that to the very end he was troubled with doubts. It was known that he was moved by the knowledge that many Catholics, including the saintly Claud de Granier, were praying for him. He certainly retracted a number of errors which he had taught in former times, and is said to have warned one of his relatives against his own writings. Several persons, including a converted minister, afterwards testified that he advised them to return to the Catholic faith. The very jealousy with which the Genevans guarded him, the rumour spread abroad that his mind was weakening in his old age, and the fact, which some assert, that on one occasion he strove to escape from the city, all point in the same direction. Whatever may be the truth of these things, it nevertheless remains undeniable that, so far as externals are concerned, Beza passed the last days of his life in the practice of the Calvinist religion, and there was no known act of reconciliation with the Church. He died in 1605.

Soon after the Provost's return to Thonon, he had another encounter with a Calvinist in which his habitual humility and command of himself again achieved a victory. It was on a Sunday, July 16, when he had been preaching on that text of the gospel—*If one strike thee on thy right cheek, turn to him also the other* (Matt. v 39). As he left the church a Protestant accosted him, and asked whether he was one who practised what he preached, or was he of the number of those of whom the Gospel said that *they say and do not* (Matt. xxiii 3). "My dear brother," replied our Saint, "I am a poor creature and full of weakness; nevertheless, miserable as I am, God has shown clearly enough what I ought to do, even though, because *the spirit is willing and the flesh weak*, I do not know what I actually might do. True it is that, while without his grace we can do nothing, yet with the grace of God we can do all things, and a reed in the hand of that heavenly grace becomes an unshakable column. If we ought to be ready to suffer death in support of our belief, how much more ought we to endure an insult for the preservation of charity? Moreover, even if I were to correspond so poorly with grace as not to be able to support such a wrong in patience, nevertheless the same Gospel which blames those who say and do not, also instructs those who listen to such inconsistent teachers to do what they teach and to pay no heed to what they do." "None the less," rejoined the Protestant, "the Saviour himself did not present the other cheek to the Pontiff's servant who struck him, but represented to him the injustice of his action." "According to that," answered the Saint, "you would place our Saviour in the ranks of those who say and do not: which would be blasphemy. We Catholics have a more respectful feeling for that model of perfection. It is not for us to criticize the deeds of him whose actions we believe to be perfect and whose ways full of wisdom: nor is it for us to say to him—'Why do you act thus?' But we see that our Saviour, urged by zeal for the salvation of this impious wretch, who had thus insulted him, remonstrated with him about his fault, in order to lead him to repentance. And after that Jesus gives up not only his cheeks to those who would strike him, but surrenders the whole of his body to wounds, with which he was covered, like Job, from head to foot."* The Protestant, struck by the gentleness and reason of this answer, expressed himself satisfied and withdrew.

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* Pérennès, l. iii, chap. xii, p. 285, quoting Father de la Rivière.

† Compare these interviews with that which B. Edmund Campion had with Beza in 1580. See *Edmund Campion*, by Richard Simpson, chap. v, p. 160.

It was about this time that Francis had an adventure with a couple of duellists. Having learned that two Catholic noblemen had gone out to a certain spot in order to settle a quarrel by means of their rapiers, he snatched up his cloak and rushed out to the place indicated. On arriving there, he found that the two gentlemen had already engaged. Rushing forward, the Provost cried out—"Gentlemen, why will you thus endanger your souls for a miserable point of honour? If you fear God at all, stop the fight!" As the combatants took no notice, but continued to thrust and parry with renewed fierceness, Francis darted boldly between them and succeeded somehow in wrenching their weapons from their hands. Surprised at his strength and vehemence, they stood quietly by, while he spoke energetically to them of the folly of their actions and the terrible danger one or other had incurred of dying under sentence of excommunication. He succeeded in bringing them to a better frame of mind, persuaded them to apologize to each other and to become friends; he eventually obtained for them absolution from the censure they had incurred by thus braving the severity of ecclesiastical law.*

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* *Esprit de S. F. de Sales*, Part XIV, Section 19.

As Francis gained more and more influence throughout the district further labours were imposed upon him in addition to his purely apostolic work. When it became known that he had obtained his degree in civil law and was practically a qualified lawyer, his people brought before him for settlement those disputes which are bound to arise in any community. With his knowledge of law and his impartiality he was generally able to settle these quarrels to the satisfaction of both sides.

He had also acquired during his studies a slight knowledge of medicine. This also was now of considerable use to him in his work. Knowing, however, that a little knowledge is a dangerous thing, he was cautious in his policy with regard to this matter. Although in simpler cases he would take it upon himself to advise a few homely remedies, he was careful to send those who suffered from more dangerous or complicated maladies to professional men, and then would restrict his action to seeing that the patient carried out the treatment prescribed. While he was thus at the service of all, he made it his special care that none should have to wait upon him himself beyond what was absolutely necessary. Whenever it was possible, he would even mend his own clothes. It happened one day that a nobleman, recently converted, came suddenly into the Provost's room on business, and found the latter engaged in his homely job of mending. When the visitor expressed his surprise that a man of Francis's birth and dignity should be thus engaged, the Provost smilingly replied that he saw nothing unsuitable in mending himself what he himself had damaged. The nobleman afterwards affirmed that this example of humility on the Saint's part strengthened him more than anything else in his new faith.†

Father de la Rivière relates that an old lady, who was not a Catholic, used to come to the Provost three or four times a day and put the same difficulties again and again in a most wearisome prolixity of language. Francis received her always with the greatest courtesy, listened patiently to all she had to say, and answered her objections with the same care that he might have used if he had never heard them before. At length there remained in her mind only one difficulty as regards the Church's teaching and discipline, and this was the celibacy of the clergy. On this subject the good dame waxed eloquent indeed, and for a time nothing that Francis could say seemed to have any effect. "You may say what you like," she ejaculated. "It is a hateful tyranny on the part of the Roman Church to impose so heavy a yoke upon her ministers." "But come now," answered the Provost, "if priests were to have families, how would they find time to render to the public the duties of their ministry? In my own case, madame, if I had been married, burdened with the temporal cares of a household, accountable for my time to a wife and children, should I have been able to receive your visits so frequently and to employ on each occasion so long a time in solving your difficulties?" This neat example of the *argumentum ad hominem*—or should we say *ad feminam?*—had the desired result. The old lady's sympathetic prejudice as to the loneliness of a celibate clergy went the way of her other objections, and she was eventually received into the Church.*

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* C. A. de S., l. iii, p. 182.

† C. A. de S., l. iii, p. 193.

The effects of the Provost's work in Chablais were gradually becoming more and more apparent as time went on. Conversions were becoming more numerous. As soon as the neophytes were received into the Church, Francis inscribed their names in a register, and henceforward made it his business to attend, not only to their spiritual welfare, but also to enquire as to their condition in matters temporal. If they were poor, he would send them to the château of M. and Mme. de Blonay, who seconded his apostolate by means of their great charity. This nobleman and his wife were, indeed, at this time the Provost's principal resource. In return for their great generosity, he devoted himself in a special manner to their spiritual welfare. He visited them often, became their director, administered the sacraments to them, and strove to lead them to the life of perfection. In the sacred union between Jesus Christ and his Church, Francis especially represented to them the nature of the spiritual union which ought to subsist between husband and wife. One day, when the Provost had treated this subject with particular eloquence in his sermons M. and Mme. de Blonay were so touched that they made a solemn compact with each other, by which they promised that, when God should choose to call one of them to himself, the other would embrace either the ecclesiastical or the religious life: and this agreement was drawn up in a document which was signed by both parties, after they had sanctified their resolution by the reception of Holy Communion. It so befell that Mme. de Blonay died a short time afterwards, and her husband, true to his compact, proceeded to enter the ecclesiastical state, and became a model of the virtues of his new life. He was greatly helped in his spiritual life by the counsels of the Provost, who visited him often and henceforth called him brother. Francis took a special delight in catechizing Mme. de Blonay's two little girls. The younger of these, Aimée, soon showed a special attraction for religion, and became one of the Provost's most ardent disciples. He, on his part, bestowed the greatest care upon her spiritual education. "I love the dear little one," he wrote to M. de Blonay, "as much as if she were my own daughter or my sister: but our fatherhoods differ in this, that while her natural father will give her her dowry, her spiritual father will give her work to do in the service of God." He strove to implant in her not merely a hatred of mortal sin, but even of the slightest deliberate venial offence: and so well did he succeed in his lessons, that the child used to say that we ought to fear sin more than plague or lightning or hell itself, and that it was incomprehensible how a soul, made to the image of God, overwhelmed with divine gifts, could willingly permit the slightest offence against his infinite goodness.

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* Father de la Rivière, p. 176.

Among the several gifts, which at this time gained for Francis a great reputation amongst the people of Chablais, was his success in dealing with certain cases of demoniac possession. The friends of these unfortunates had recourse to the Provost, and he, by use of the consecrated exorcisms of the Church, succeeded in gaining for some a complete freedom from their spiritual persecution and for others a great relief, consolation and strength in combating their grievous affliction. This astonishing success had a great influence in promoting a better feeling towards the Church. The ministers, on their part, used every effort to counteract this influence. Some had recourse to their ancient calumny that the Provost was a sorcerer and derived his powers over the possessed from the devil himself; others maintained that these cases of possession were nothing but examples of delirious imagination or jangled nerves; whilst a third section maintained that there were no such beings as demons or that, if there were, they could not possibly have any powers over corporeal creatures. In support of these contentions they spread everywhere throughout their districts a book, written by a supposed doctor of medicine in Paris, and dedicated, by the way, to Henry IV, in which the author attacked the exorcisms that are found in the Church's liturgy. Francis thought it necessary to undertake a refutation of this work and consequently composed a treatise on *Demonomania* or on those possessed by the Demon. This work was not printed, but was copied by hand and distributed amongst the people according to need. The Abbé Hamon's résumé of this pamphlet is as follows:

"In this treatise the author begins by establishing the fact that the angelic nature is in communication with the human; that, since the entry of sin into the world, Satan exercises an influence upon man, sometimes to incline him to evil and cause strife in his soul, sometimes, when God permits it—as the Gospel and history, both sacred and profane, often attest—to torment his body, to carry it from place to place, to cause it various agitations, to cast it upon the ground, to act and speak by its organs, in such a way that he becomes, as it were, its master and *possesses it*. The author then defines the extent and limits of possession, which can never go so far as to force the will and make it offend God in spite of itself. Then he determines its causes: on the one hand God allows it sometimes as a punishment for sin, sometimes as a trial of virtue; on the other hand, the demon exerts this phenomenon out of hatred for mankind. The writer then describes the signs and characteristics of possession. Finally, he indicates the remedies which God, in his goodness, has furnished against this great evil and proves the existence of the power of the Church to deliver by its exorcisms those who are possessed. This power, he says, is seen to have been exercised from the earliest ages of the Church, since in those very times the apologists of Christianity pointed out to the pagans, as one of the strongest proofs of its divinity, the miraculous power, which all Christians exercised, of driving forth demons from the bodies of those possessed. The author goes thoroughly into all these deep questions, developing them with perfect clearness of exposition and ever rigorous logic, calling to his help the testimony of the Scriptures, of the Fathers and of history itself, sacred and profane. He concludes by saying that God, who restrains the rage of the demons when they torment the possessed, also places limits to their malice when they strive to draw souls into error, and baffles their cunning by revealing it through the instrumentality of the Church's prudence; that then, seeing themselves exposed, they have recourse to the world, their officious agent, and inspire it with violence and cunning, the two arms it uses in attacking the children of God; that the Church, it is true, has no weapons to resist violence, but that, in order to defend itself against calumny, it has innocence in its actions, truth in its words, and authority in its judgements" (Hamon, i, 270, chap. vi).

CHAPTER X*

(1597–1598)

Plans for special celebration at Annemasse—Francis refuses the coadjutorship—The Forty Hours at Annemasse—Intrigues of the Genevans—Controversial work—Francis interviews the Duke—Discussion with Colonel de Brotty—Francis persuaded to accept the coadjutorship—He falls dangerously ill—F. Chérubin's apostolate at Thonon—Incident of the bells—Official visit of President Favre to Thonon—F. Chérubin disputes with Lignarius—Course of Francis's illness—He recovers

AT the time when Francis attended the synod at Annecy, he gave there an account of the state of religion in Chablais and begged the Bishop to send him more missioners, as his own efforts were no longer sufficient for a ministry that was widening every day. The Bishop now found himself in a position to grant this request. The missionaries thus obtained were Father Esprit of Beaume and Father Chérubin of Maurienne, whose names have already figured in these pages, and Father Saunier, a Jesuit, who had been employed during the last two years in the bailiwick of Ternier.

On July 28, 1597, these three religious made their way to Annemasse. This was a little town situated about two leagues from Geneva, in a country which had been ravaged in 1536 by the Bernese and Genevans. The inhabitants, nevertheless, had remained loyal to the faith of their fathers. On the date mentioned above the Provost, Canon Louis de Sales, Balthasar Maniglier, the parish priest, and Baron de Viry also came to Annemasse to meet the Capuchin and Jesuit fathers. The next day they held a council in order to deliberate measures for the furtherance of the faith in that country, and drew up a series of petitions or recommendations to be presented to the Duke. These were, firstly, a renewal of the demand that the benefices held by the Knights of SS Maurice and Lazarus should be handed over to the Church for the benefit of the parishes already founded or about to be founded; secondly, that there should be established at Thonon a college of Jesuits, the members of which should evangelize the neighbourhood and should thence extend their sphere of action throughout the diocese; this foundation was rendered easier by the fact that the collegiate church of Viry was willing to give up, in consideration of a certain indemnity, the priory of St Hippolytus, with its fine buildings and its revenue of twelve hundred crowns.* The petitioners also asked, on behalf of the Catholics of Thonon, that these latter should be partially exempted from certain taxes, with the object of attracting others to the faith by means of this privilege. In order to indemnify the church of Viry for the suggested cession of the priory of St Hippolytus, the Duke was asked to sanction the union of the churches of St Julien and of Thairy with the collegiate district, with the grant of the tithes of two neighbouring parishes, Beaumont and Bernex. The church at Viry, however, was to furnish a chaplain for the soldiers of the fort of St Catherine. The petitioners also begged that to the curé of Annemasse might be granted the tithes formerly enjoyed by the religious of Bellerive in that parish and now wrongfully paid to a Protestant in Geneva. They also urged the Prince to use his influence in bringing about the much desired theological dispute between the champions of the two religions, which was to have been held in Geneva, but which, up to the present, the Calvinist ministers had evaded.

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* Hamon, l. ii, chap. v.

It was at first decided that Father Esprit should bear this petition to the Duke, and he had already journeyed to Annecy to receive the commands of the Bishop, when that prelate suggested that it would perhaps be better if Father Chérubin were chosen as messenger. For the latter, being personally known to His Highness and a number of the ducal suite, was in a better position to carry out negotiations to a successful issue. Father Chérubin, therefore, accepting the charge, went off in search of the court. The Duke was at this time fighting against the French troops under the famous Lesdiguières in the neighbourhood of Miolans. The Capuchin, nevertheless, was able to obtain his interview, and he received from the Prince a favourable answer. It was one thing, however, with the Duke to sanction a plan, and quite another to put it into execution: consequently, it was not for some time afterwards that his consent was made effective. The Abbé Hamon suggests that he may have been unwilling to rouse the anger of the Bernese, so long as he was at war with France.

When Father Chérubin had accomplished the first part of his mission, he then went on to ask permission for another project, which had been in his mind for some time. This was the celebration at Annemasse of the Forty Hours' Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. He hoped that this ceremony, both by the grace it would draw down from heaven and by the attention it would arouse throughout the country, would greatly contribute to the furtherance of the Catholic religion. The Bishop of Geneva, who also shared this hope, had promised to lend further solemnity to the occasion by presiding at the various offices. The Duke of Savoy and the Papal Nuncio not only gave the project their approval, but engaged themselves to assist it with money for the necessary expenses: the former gave 500 crowns; the latter 200. The prince also loaned to the Committee of Annemasse the entire silver furnishings of his own chapel, as well as a quantity of rich hangings and carpets: he furthermore ordered his officers to neglect no measure which might serve to increase the solemnity of the feasts. Finally, as he himself was unable to be present, he commissioned the Governor of Savoy to attend as his representative.

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* £175.

In addition to these things, there was still another matter that had to be settled. For some time now, Claude de Granier had been feeling the weight of years, and his strength no longer corresponded to the demands made upon it by the needs of his diocese. He realized more and more that he was in want of a coadjutor, and, as the matter was of the most vital importance, he had devoted to it much consideration and many prayers. He had at his right hand a nephew of his, the Abbé de Chissé, who already filled the difficult post of vicar-general with great success, and who might certainly be described as one who was ripe for the episcopate. But the Bishop was not satisfied with finding a cleric who was worthy of the high office in question: he wished to make choice of one who possessed the necessary qualities to a superlative degree. Finally, after much prayer and reflection, his choice fell upon the Provost. Not content with making this selection according to his own personal lights, Mgr. de Granier spoke of it to those who were most intimately admitted to his counsels, and every one of these approved of his intention. He mentioned the matter to his own nephew, and the latter, with a generosity worthy of his reputation, expressed to the aged prelate the satisfaction he felt at such a choice. Finally the Bishop broached the subject to Francis himself. The reader, with his knowledge of the Provost's humility, need scarcely be told that he rejected the proposal with all the strength of his will. But the more he refused to accept the dignity offered to him, the more the Bishop became convinced of his fitness to receive it. Taking advantage of Father Chérubin's visit to the Duke of Savoy, Mgr. de Granier commissioned the friar to negotiate the affair with His Highness. As a matter of fact, the Prince had already designated the Provost in his mind as successor to the aged bishop, when the Ordinary had recently been brought nigh to death by a serious illness. He therefore willingly agreed to the Prelate's proposal, and on August 29, 1597, issued letters patent, by which he nominated Francis de Sales for the bishopric of Geneva, supplicated the Holy Father to confirm this nomination by way of a coadjutorship, or by any other means proper for the purpose, and based his petition both on the knowledge and rare qualities of the subject proposed and on the excellence of the work he had accomplished, and was still carrying on, for the conversion of Chablais. Claude de Granier, delighted with the receipt of these documents, held them in reserve for the time being, until a favourable opportunity should present itself of communicating them to Francis and of putting them into execution.

As soon as the Bishop had received Father Chérubin's report, he issued notices throughout the diocese that the Forty Hours' Adoration would be held at Annemasse on September 7 and the days following, and he invited the faithful of every parish to send as many representatives as possible to attend the function. Francis on his part set himself to the task of devising such attractions as would draw the multitudes. For this purpose, he determined upon the representation of one of those sacred mystery plays of which our Catholic forefathers were so fond, and by means of which they gained a realistic idea of much of the Bible history. The subject chosen by the Provost was the sacrifice of Abraham. He at once commissioned Canon Louis de Sales to compose the play, and appointed as a collaborator his own brother Louis, Seigneur of La Thuille, who had already gained a reputation, not only in the realms of law, philosophy, and history, but also in those of literature and poetry. Working with zeal and facility, the two authors were not long in composing their drama, and in distributing to capable actors the various characters. Francis himself was chosen to speak the part allotted to the Eternal Father. To Father Chérubin fell the work of preparing the more material part of the representation. He erected upon the public square a vast auditorium, composed of a heavy framework of timber, covered with tent canvas, so that the people should have full protection from any possible inclemency of the weather.

In the meanwhile the news of these preparations and of others, made for the main purpose of the occasion, was spreading abroad through the country. At the appointed time hundreds of people, from various parts of the diocese, began to converge upon the little town, and the roads were covered with pious folk hurrying to take their part in the celebration. So great was the concourse that the inhabitants of Geneva became alarmed at the presence of so many Catholics in their immediate neighbourhood, and soldiers were dispatched from the city to guard the main roads leading to Genevan territory. On receiving information of this hostile movement, a certain number of people became greatly alarmed—they feared a clash between the crowds and the men-at-arms, and were inclined to hold back from the whole affair. In order to instil courage into the timid, Francis immediately decided to go from Thonon to Annemasse in procession with his Catholics, and furthermore resolved that as a reparation for the outrages committed against the Cross during the country's occupation by the heretics, the sign of our salvation should be boldly carried in front of the people. First of all, he submitted his plan to M. Lambert, the Governor, who not only gave his approval, but promised to take part himself. Then Francis communicated his idea to the people. These, always ready to follow his lead, thoroughly understood and appreciated the motives which inspired the Provost's intentions: they could not, however, altogether disguise their fear of being attacked on their way by the heretics, who would be irritated at thus seeing the Cross openly honoured in their midst, and who would feel confidence in the support of the armed force of Geneva. Nevertheless, drawing courage from their leader, they gathered together at the church of St Hippolytus early on the morning of September 7, where Francis began the day's proceedings by celebrating Mass. Then he went on to organize the procession. The first thing to do was to find someone to carry the wooden cross which he had had constructed for the occasion. But even amongst those who had courage enough to join the procession, he found none who would venture to carry the cross. The Provost finally turned to Georges Rolland, and commissioned him to do so: in spite of his usual attitude of obedience, the latter made difficulties in this case, and could not refrain from voicing his apprehension. He and the others were evidently of the opinion that if anyone was likely to suffer injury at the hands of the Calvinists, it would certainly be the cross-bearer. The Provost smilingly reassured him. "Do not be afraid," he said, "I shall always be close to you. They will not be able to harm you without first harming me, and, if needs be, we will die together." This settled the matter: Georges may not have been quite so keen on martyrdom as his master, but his loyalty was beyond reproach. When the matter of the cross-bearer was settled, the hymn *Vexilla Regis* was sung: then the first petitions of the Litany of the Saints were intoned, and the procession left the church. Georges Rolland came first, bearing the cross: all those who were sufficiently strong to make the long journey on foot followed his lead, while the Provost, vested in cassock, surplice, and stole, took up the last place. As they passed through the various villages on their route, singing hymns or reciting prayers, they were joined by the new converts of Chablais, who fell into position after the Provost, and in a short time the line of pilgrims behind him was as long as that which he saw in front. Thus they went on their way, over the muddy and difficult routes which scarcely deserved the name of road, until, still singing hymns and litanies, they reached their destination. Just as they arrived, Francis was told that a contingent of the Confraternity of the Holy Cross from Annecy was drawing near to Annemasse: without taking any rest he immediately organized a crowd of his faithful followers, and went out again in procession to meet the new arrivals. When he saw the long line of penitents, marching, many of them barefooted, in their black robes, and singing the litanies of Jesus crucified, the thought of his work in founding the confraternity rose to his mind, a deep gratitude seized his heart as he realized how God had blessed his labours, and he had difficulty in restraining his tears. As soon as the two processions met and mingled, he took his place by the side of Canon Louis de Sales, who accompanied the brotherhood of Annecy as Prior, and together the two companies made their way towards the church of Annemasse. Here, before the altar of the Blessed Virgin, a few prayers were recited, and a motet in honour of our Lady was sung by the members of a choir. Then, as it was already dusk, they all retired for the night to the lodgings prepared for them.

Next day, which was a Sunday, the Forty Hours began with the celebration of High Mass by the Bishop. After the Gospel Francis preached a moving sermon, inspired by the great concourse before him and by the zeal for souls which burned in his heart. A large number of people associated themselves with the holy Sacrifice in the most intimate manner possible by receiving Communion, and after the Mass the Blessed Sacrament was carried in procession through the streets in the midst of a populace whose devotion and fervour were manifest. On returning to the Church, the Bishop placed the monstrance on the rich throne prepared, and Father Chérubin inaugurated the first watch by preaching an eloquent sermon. The watches were divided amongst the people from the different districts, those of Annecy and Thonon taking the first. At the end of each hour a procession from the village or town appointed for that time entered the church, and at the beginning of each watch a sermon was preached for the purpose of arousing the devotion of the people and assisting them in their prayer. These sermons were undertaken by the various priests present, of whose names ten are given by Charles Auguste de Sales in his *Life* of the Saint, though he says that others assisted in the work besides those mentioned.

Whilst some were thus employed in watching before the Blessed Sacrament, others were engaged in another significant ceremony. In days gone by there had stood on the high road from Annemasse to Geneva a stone calvary, the two figures of which—our Lord upon the Cross and our Lady at its foot—were executed in marble. Needless to say, the Calvinists in their iconoclastic devastations had destroyed this memorial of Christ's passion. Just about this time the Catholics had decided to replace the crucifix, though, on account of their poverty in these warring days, they had had to content themselves with wood instead of stone and marble. They had expressed a desire that the erection of this cross should take place on the first day of the Forty Hours' celebration. Francis, delighted to accede to this request, blessed the cross on Sunday morning, and at the same time had fastened to it a metal plate bearing a short verse, descriptive of the true attitude of Catholics towards the instrument of the Passion. Without attempting to render the inscription in correct verse, we give the following version of its meaning:

> "Nor wood nor stone the Catholic adores,
> But God, who died upon the Cross
> And gave it honour in his sacred blood."

On the Sunday evening the Brotherhood of the Holy Cross of Annecy, accompanied by the Bishop, and followed by a great crowd of people, went to the place where the new cross had been kept, took it upon their shoulders, and carried it in procession to the spot on which it was to be erected, while all sang the *Vexilla Regis*. There still remained the base of the old calvary, consisting of three steps and the broken shaft: a hole was dug into the ground close to these and the new cross, lifted up by willing and devout hands, was planted as close as possible to the old site. Then Father Esprit, addressing those present, pointed out the cross as the memorial of infinite love on the part of a God who for the sake of mankind had shed the last drop of his blood: developing this idea he went on to prove to his hearers how great was the honour due to such a sign. He spoke with such eloquence and force that he moved not only the Catholics, but even those Calvinists who had been attracted to the spot by a spirit of curiosity, and who now found themselves looking upon the cross with a new understanding of its significance.

At the end of the ceremony leaflets on the worship of the Cross, written by a Franciscan, were distributed among the people. One of these leaflets afterwards fell into the hands of Antoine de la Faye, the Calvinist minister, the sequel of which fact we shall see further on.

On the next day the religious observances connected with the Forty Hours' Adoration continued without showing the slightest abatement of zeal on the part of the Catholic worshippers. The fact that the cross had been erected in their country, without any hostile demonstration on the part of Geneva, was looked upon as a special sign that God's blessing and protection was upon them. The processions from the various districts continued to arrive at the church for their turn of watching before the Blessed Sacrament: that which came from the bailiwick of Ternier was remarkable amongst the others. Its numbers rose to the thousands, and included no less than 700 newly converted Protestants, the fruit of three years' labours by the Dominicans and Jesuits. When the huge crowd was gathered together for the final celebration, Father Chérubin, who had been chosen as the preacher, found renewed inspiration from the very earnestness and zeal of his audience. Eloquent as he was known to be, he rose above himself on this occasion. He gave a clear and striking exposition of the Catholic faith, revealing its beauty with an eloquence born of his love, and vindicating it with that fearlessness for which he was renowned. His last words were a challenge to the ministers of Geneva: "We have put forward nothing here to-day which we are not prepared to repeat in any other place, and to maintain in the presence of the whole crowd of ministers. They themselves had proposed a conference upon the disputed doctrines. We accepted it with joy: and all that we awaited, in order to attend it, was a guarantee for the safe-keeping of our persons. That guarantee they have not chosen to send. As to ourselves, we call God to witness in your presence, that we will always most willingly accept any conference, in order to show to you in the clearest manner that in the past years you have been cruelly deceived and cut off from the one and only true Church."

It can easily be imagined that this great assembly of people from various districts, this evidence of a keen and vivid faith, the eloquence and learning of the preachers, the earnest devotion of the worshippers and the manifest joy that these Catholics found in their religion, had a great influence on the Protestants of the surrounding country, whose natural joyfulness of character must surely at times have felt restricted by the gloomy tenets and practices of Calvinism. They were hearing Catholic doctrine, perhaps for the first time, from Catholic lips, and were beginning to sense that these doctrines had been much misrepresented by their own ministers. The inscription on the new cross of Annemasse was itself a constant sermon and a great enlightener against the travesties they had heard of Catholic teaching. "Our ministers, then, deceived us grossly," they said, "when they told us that Catholics adore wood and stone: this inscription shows us, on the contrary, that it is only Jesus Christ whom they adore under the figure of the cross."* Thus truth came gradually to their souls. A large number were either converted or put upon the road towards conversion: and the great prayer of the Forty Hours had all the effect that was expected of it.†

One of the results of the great assembly at Annemasse was, consequently, to rouse the Protestant ministers to action. They made such representations to the Syndics of Geneva that the latter wrote to Berne, complaining that, despite the treaties by which both parties were bound, the Catholics, and in particular the Capuchins, were working to overthrow the Protestant religion in the districts of Thonon and Ternier. This was their answer to Father Chérubin's challenge. The Bernese at once wrote to the Duke of Savoy and to the Governor of Allinges threatening to have recourse to arms unless the Capuchins were speedily restrained. The Governor, alarmed at this threat of war at such an awkward moment, requested Father Chérubin and his companions to withdraw to their convents

* Dep. of Marquis de Lullin.

† C. A. de S., l. iii, p. 188 *et seq.*

for the sake of the general peace. This by no means fell in with the intentions of Father Chérubin. He promptly wrote to the Pope, the Nuncio, and the Duke. To the last he suggested that it was unworthy that a Catholic prince of his standing should be made the dupe of this trick of the ministers. He represented that since the beginning of their mission a great number of heretics had been received into the Church; that there was promise of a still greater conversion in the future; that more than four thousand people from the districts of Gaillard and Vaud and even from Geneva were regularly attending the Catholic sermons; and that it was on account of the ministers' embarrassment, caused by their continual refusal to accept the Catholic challenge to a conference, that these men were striving to oust the Capuchins by means of political pressure. The Duke's answer was most satisfactory. Far from being intimidated by the threats of the Bernese, he congratulated the Fathers upon their success and exhorted them to continue their labours with the same zeal as in the past.

On the conclusion of the Forty Hours at Annemasse Francis went back to Thonon, taking with him, it is believed, the Jesuit, Father Saunier. On September 16, exactly three years since his first arrival at Thonon, he was joined there by two of the Capuchin Fathers who had been at Annemasse—Father Antoine of Tournon and Father Esprit of Beaume. Thus the workers in the enlarged mission were not many, but according to the Provost's own testimony they made up in zeal what they lacked in numbers.

The arrival of these auxiliaries left the Provost more time to devote himself to controversial writing, which had become necessary at this time on account of certain assertions and pamphlets, circulated by the Protestants amongst the people. Thus Viret, the minister, was never tired of proclaiming that the Mass was an idolatry, and that the dogma of the Real Presence destroyed the Creed and upset the *analogy* of the faith. Of this last expression, Francis observed, none of the minister's audience understood the meaning, but he delighted to use it, because it made him seem the more learned. In order to answer these assertions, the Provost composed a little treatise under the title of *Simple Considerations on the Symbol of the Apostles, for the Confirmation of the Catholic Faith with regard to the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar*. In this work the author shows forth, by means of a series of meditations, not only the reasons best suited to help those who were troubled by the incomprehensibility of the Real Presence, but also the analogy of the faith between this mystery and all those contained in the Creed. As an example of the character of this little work, we give one of his thoughts on the words *I believe in God the Father, Creator of Heaven and Earth*, as considered in relation to the Holy Eucharist. "God is God in all things," he says, "but in those which are most difficult does he best show forth his divinity. . . . If the word of God had such virtue that by it things that had no existence were brought into being, how much more easily could it take things which already existed and change the one into the other!" When the author comes to the words *born of the Virgin Mary*, he makes the following commentary: "Why, O my God, should one strive to find the natural order of things in your body, which was created outside of all natural order, and was born of a virgin? But if your body, passing from the virginal womb of Mary like a ray of sunlight through glass, left it without occupying space, why should one find it incredible that this body should occupy no space in the Blessed Sacrament?"

Viret thought to find in these words matter for censure, and ventured to maintain, in opposition even with what many Protestants believed, that Mary gave birth to her Son in the ordinary, natural manner, and that the proposition which enounced that the birth of Jesus was miraculous was not merely false but even heretical. In doing this Viret laid himself open to his adversary. Francis proved from Scripture that Mary's virginity suffered neither in the conception nor in the birth of her Son, since Isaias foretold not only that a virgin should conceive but that a virgin should give birth. The Provost supported his interpretation with the authority of St Ambrose, from whose writings he had taken almost textually the words complained of; he also quoted St Augustine, who declared Jovinian to be a heretic for the very same error committed by the minister; and finally added a complete refutation of the reasons adduced by Viret in support of his contention. The minister made a reply to this defence, but the Saint's answer to his reply was so overwhelming that the poor man was reduced to silence. Not even amongst his brother ministers could he find consolation, for these, more learned, perhaps, than himself, blamed him rigorously for combating a point of doctrine which was generally admitted even amongst the supporters of the Reformation.*

In the meanwhile more work had been preparing for the Provost's pen in the city of Geneva. On September 12, at a meeting of the Company of the Pastors of Geneva, two of the leaflets issued at Annemasse were communicated to the assembled ministers. Their register says: "On the same day there were presented to the Company two leaflets written by the Capuchins in this neighbourhood, for the adoration of the Cross: to the which it was found good to answer briefly, also in the form of leaflet: and the matter was entrusted to the charge of M. de la Faye, who was to communicate with MM. de Bèze and Perrot."† Antoine de la Faye, therefore, aided by Beza in the biblical department, and by Perrot in that of the Fathers, set to work speedily and in a short time produced the desired pamphlet. It appeared probably in the month of October, and, in its essentials, was a violent and blasphemous invective against the sacred sign of salvation. The Provost at once convoked all the priests who were then at Thonon, in order to decide what should be done with regard to the new publication. Their decision was that the Provost should undertake to write an answer. He amongst them all, they said, was best equipped for the work; the challenge was issued in the main to him, since he had been responsible for the erection of the cross at Annemasse and had in a way fathered the original leaflets; moreover, he already knew something of La Faye and his methods. Francis, though somewhat confused by the choice of the company, willingly undertook the prosecution of the work, and promised to devote his leisure time to its composition. One of his reasons, as he afterwards made known in a preface, was "that, being the oldest member of the Confraternity of the Cross, he felt himself obliged to uphold its honour." We have a glimpse of what was the Saint's first labour in the deposition of Canon Gard: he testified, "I have seen the copy of the infamous heretical pamphlet, which was offered to the servant of God. It was annotated in his own handwriting. He had noted in the margins the false allegations, the insolences, the blasphemies, impostures and impieties of the minister. And to show his respect for the Holy See in the matter of reading heretical books . . . he wrote with his own hand these words of submission and obedience—*An heretical book for the use of Francis de Sales, who had permission for it.*" Thus, then, Francis set to work. But the leisure, which he had hoped for, was not to be granted to him at this time.*

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* C. A. de S., l. iii, p. 170.

† Registre de la Compagnie des Pasteurs de l'Eglise de Genève. *Vide* E.N., Tom. II, p. ix.

Mgr. de Granier had just decided to send his nephew, François de Chissé, to Rome, as his delegate for the official visit *ad limina Apostolorum*, which his own age and ill-health prevented him from making in person. As a special mission, his nephew was to try and obtain from the Pope the removal of the benefices of Chablais from the possession of the Order of SS. Maurice and Lazarus, and also the powers needed for the re-establishment of the parishes in the several missionary bailiwicks. As the Provost would be able to give the Holy Father the necessary information more accurately and more fully than anyone else, the Bishop desired that he should join M. de Chissé. Francis was therefore commanded to go to Annecy. He left Thonon on October 20, arriving at Annecy the same day. On the morrow he officially published the letters patent by which all new converts were exempted from the penalties inflicted upon heretics: then, after an interview with his Bishop, he set out for the headquarters of the Duke, who was at this time superintending the completion of the fort of Barraux. Having been received with the greatest kindness, Francis gave a detailed account to the Duke of the progress of Catholicism in Chablais, and then went on to suggest the various additional measures which would ensure the success of the whole mission. His Highness ended by granting the Provost all that was demanded—the restoration of the parishes, the suppression of the Protestant ministers' pensions, and the surrender by the Knights of SS. Maurice and Lazarus of the ecclesiastical property which had been placed under their charge.

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* E.N., note (i), on p. x of Tom. II.

Before dismissing the Provost, the Duke gave him an opportunity of doing some missionary work at Barraux. The officer in command of the regiment of Chablais was a certain Colonel Maurice de Brotty, a very convinced Calvinist. Apparently, the Duke had been striving to persuade this gentleman to become a Catholic, though without any marked success, and he now decided to make a further attempt by means of the Provost. He therefore summoned De Brotty into his presence and, introducing the soldier to Francis, suggested that they should discuss the question of religion between them. The Duke then left the room. He did not, however, go any further than the other side of the door, but remained outside listening to the controversy that was being carried on within. Indeed, so keen was he about this matter that he remained there for no less than three hours, following the discussion, as Charles Auguste de Sales remarks in his delightfully naïve manner, "with a patience truly worthy of admiration." However, even this admirable patience seems to have been worn out at the end of the third hour, and the Duke re-entered the room. "Well," he said, "which of you has won the day? Brotty, do you recognize now the truth of our religion?"—"Monseigneur," replied the Colonel, "I have but a scant acquaintance with theology. Consequently it must not be thought strange that I am not suited to this kind of warfare: for I have no weapons to defend myself with. But I have firmly fixed in my memory all the Provost's arguments, and I will discuss them with the ministers. After that, I beg Your Highness to believe, I shall not allow myself to be influenced by anything outside reason: I shall embrace the truth as soon as I see it." The Duke, feeling that De Brotty was already somewhat shaken in his beliefs, rejoiced at the results of the interview which he had arranged. He continued to converse with the colonel for some time after Francis had retired, talking for the most part about the Provost, and showing how great was the esteem in which he held the young ecclesiastic.*

In the meanwhile the Bishop was becoming more and more anxious to persuade Francis to accept the position of coadjutor-bishop of the diocese. Age and infirmity were making him feel altogether unfit for the burden of his charge, and the responsibility was preying on his mind. It seems to have worried him so much as to affect even his sleep. One day he had attended in one of the colleges a little play in which one of the items represented the hunting of wolves, disguised beneath the fleeces of sheep. The idea impressed itself so strongly on his mind that during the night he dreamt that a pack of wolves was attacking his sheep: he rushed forward to defend his charges, but, helpless in his loneliness, could not prevent some of his flock being carried away by the raiders, and he awoke, crying aloud for help. Hilaire Furier, his chaplain, slept in a room above that of Mgr. de Granier, and hearing the Bishop cry out in the middle of the night, ran down at once to see what was the matter. The aged prelate, still under the influence of the nightmare, related what he had seen in his dream, and commented on the truth that only too really did it represent the facts. "Alas!" he said, "it is only too true that my flock is surrounded by wolves. And I, burdened with infirmities, have not the strength to drive back the enemy. Where, indeed, am I to find the help I need?" The chaplain did his best to comfort the bishop, representing to him that the affairs of his diocese were in good condition, that he had an excellent body of learned and virtuous priests to assist him, and that finally Providence had given to him the greatest possible help in the person of the Provost, who doubtless would soon be made his coadjutor. "May Heaven grant it be so!" exclaimed the Bishop. "But will he consent?—O my son, my son, where are you? Have pity on my old age." When the chaplain at length left him, he passed the rest of the night in thinking out the means by which he could obtain the consent of the man whose help he desired so much, and as soon as day broke, despatched a messenger to the château of Sales, bidding Francis come to him at once. The Provost obeyed promptly, and, on arriving at the episcopal residence, was received by the Bishop with every mark of affection. The old man, holding him in his arms, and without telling him what service was expected of him, begged him in the most earnest terms to come to the assistance of his bishop at a moment of great need. Francis, not having the slightest inkling of the service to be demanded of him, assured Mgr. de Granier of his willingness to do anything in his power. On this the Bishop rejoined: "What I ask of you is to become my coadjutor." This reply threw Francis into the greatest confusion, and he remained for some moments in silence, his eyes bent towards the ground. Then, recovering from his embarrassment, he answered: "My Lord, I will refuse no labour that you can give me. But in this matter the kindness of your feelings towards me misleads you. I have none of the qualities necessary for such a dignity. In your diocese you have many other priests, distinguished by birth, intellect, and virtue, who are infinitely more capable than I am of bearing this burden. Excuse me, therefore, if I refuse to accept it." Nothing that the Bishop could say at this time had power to alter the attitude of mind represented by this answer. Francis refused his most pressing invitations, and at length, having taken leave of the aged prelate, he returned to the château of Sales.*

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* C. A de S., l. iii, p. 194.

Mgr. de Granier, however, was not discouraged by this first failure. He at once communicated his intentions to the canons of the chapter, and having received their unanimous support, begged them to recommend the matter to God in their prayers. Then he set out for the château of Sales. Having arrived at the house, he told M. and Mme. de Boisy of the choice which he had made in the matter of the coadjutorship, and begged their assistance for the accomplishment of his desire. Aided by these new and powerful auxiliaries, he made another attempt to overcome the Saint's humility. Francis remained unshaken in his resolve to refuse the dignity offered to him. Moved though he was by the prayers of his parents, he was, if anything, more distrustful of their special pleading than of the request of his bishop: Mgr. de Granier, therefore, was obliged to depart without having gained the accomplishment of his desire. But the more Francis refused, the more did the Bishop become convinced of the excellence of his choice, and he perseveringly continued to exert pressure by every means in his power, calling to his help the assistance of all those persons among the nobility and clergy who might be thought to have influence over the mind of the Provost. The latter, however, remained unconvinced.

At length the Bishop resolved to make a last definite attempt to overcome the Saint's manifestly genuine aversion for the responsible position which was being offered to him. This time he chose as his envoy a man who, in addition to a gift of persuasion, seems to have possessed the power of speaking with a certain authoritative force and with a direct plainness, which was much more likely to influence a man of Francis's character than any amount of entreaty. As we shall see, he practically commanded the Provost to accept the coadjutorship as a duty, where others had besought him to take it upon himself as a favour. This priest was the Abbé Pierre Critain, who occupied the position of senior chaplain in the episcopal court. Having made his way one evening to the château of Sales, and having been received with the hospitality usual to that house, he did not at once explain the object of his coming, but deferred it to the following morning. On meeting Francis at an early hour the next day, he proposed to the latter that they should say their office together under the portico of the château. Then, when they had laid aside their breviaries, the Chaplain asked Francis if he had any idea of the object of this unexpected visit, and on the Provost replying with a negation, he broached the subject of his difficult mission. "Well," he said, "I want you to know that the Bishop has sent me in order to declare to you his express will that you should be associated with him as his coadjutor, and in order to obtain from you a definite answer. For more than a year he has destined you for this position. He has himself asked your consent; he has requested other people to speak to you on the subject: and up to now he has received nothing from you but obstinate refusals. This has caused him the greatest vexation and sorrow. Now, sir, it is for you to make this a matter of conscience, and to entertain the fear that, in so acting, you are running contrary to the will of God. I want you to think the thing over, and to let me know what answer I am to take back this time to the Bishop." "Sir," answered the Provost, "I beg you to tell my Lord that I thank him very humbly for his good will towards me, that I am very grateful to him for all his kindness, and that I hold him in the deepest veneration: but that, nevertheless, the charge which he offers me is beyond my powers. I have no desire for it, and beg him to pass it on to someone else. Moreover, let it be considered that if I were to become his coadjutor, he would be obliged to set apart for me a considerable part of his income, which I know to be already insufficient for the proper upkeep of his household, and it would grieve me to see him suffer such a privation. I, on my part, am not born for a position of command: it would be quite enough for me to have charge of some parish. In addition to that, I would write, I would go anywhere His Lordship should wish, I would do whatever he should desire: but with regard to the episcopate, it cannot even be thought of!"—"But surely," replied the Abbé Critain, "you do not want to go against the will of God. Now the choice which the Bishop has made of you carries with it evident marks of its being the divine will. For, first of all, in this choice the Bishop has not listened to the voice of flesh and blood, which would rather have made him nominate someone in his own family; moreover, he has not acted in the matter with undue haste, since he has thought over the project for a long time; neither has he relied upon his own lights alone, for he has taken counsel of the wisest men, not only amongst his own friends, but amongst the clergy, the nobility, and the religious orders, all of whom have applauded his choice. There is no one who does not desire you, and in so far your election is canonical: the ancient Fathers were never elected in any other way to the episcopate. Can you not yourself see that this unanimous choice is a proof of the divine will? You know well that in such a case the voice of the people is the voice of God, and that it is the Holy Spirit who wills that you should be a bishop. Added to all this, see here in my hand the letters patent from the Duke of Savoy, who is delighted to confirm the choice of your ordinary, and here a letter from Cardinal de Medicis, who declares that he will joyfully undertake to support your promotion before the Holy See. What further sign of the will of God can you possibly demand?"

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* Hamon, vol. i, p. 288; C. A. de S., l. iv, p. 241.

It was immediately evident that the attitude adopted by this new ambassador was the right one. Francis was manifestly disturbed and his resolution shaken. For some moments he walked up and down the portico in silence. Because he was really unambitious, he did not desire promotion; because he was deeply conscientious, he was afraid of the terrible responsibility of the episcopate; but this very conscientiousness made him fear greatly to oppose the will of God, and the arguments of the good chaplain were practically unanswerable. In his distress of mind, he saw no other resource but prayer. "Let us go to the church of Thorens," he said to the Abbé Critain. "We will each say the Mass of the Holy Ghost, serving each other: and what God shall inspire in our minds, that we will do." Accordingly they went to the church. The Chaplain said the first Mass, and Francis the second. Then kneeling down upon the altar steps, the Saint remained for a long time motionless, his eyes fixed upon the tabernacle, his face lit up as of one in the power of an ecstasy. At last, rising up, he left the church. "Well, sir," asked the Abbé Critain, "what answer have you received from God?"—"Tell the Bishop," answered Francis, "that I have always had the greatest fear of the episcopacy, but that, since it is his will and his command, I am ready to obey. If I accomplish any good, all the merit will be due to his prayers. Nevertheless, I beg you, speak to no one of what has just happened."

The Abbé Critain congratulated him upon his decision, and promised to keep the matter as secret as possible for the present. He did not, however, think it right to make it a mystery for the family, and consequently, before taking his departure, he informed M. and Mme. de Boisy, as well as Canon Louis de Sales, of the success of his mission. These last were overjoyed at the news.

On arriving at Annecy, the chaplain found Mgr. de Granier in the company of a considerable number of people. He made his way to the Bishop, and seized the opportunity of communicating his good news in a whisper. "Ah! blessed be God!" exclaimed the prelate, as, with tears of joy in his eyes, he rose to his feet. "Up to the present, I have done nothing worth doing. But now that I have obtained my son De Sales as coadjutor and successor, I have laboured successfully and have accomplished much for the welfare of my diocese." The Bishop lost no time in hastening the preparations for the journey to Rome. Already by his orders a judicial enquiry had been made at Thorens as to the Provost's age; already Father Chérubin had received orders to replace Francis in his work at Thonon, when it pleased Providence to delay the journey. Francis was seized at Annecy with a virulent fever which brought him to the gates of death, and which for the space of five months afterwards condemned him to inaction.*

During the Provost's illness, Father Chérubin continued the work of the mission in Chablais. The greater part of the province was at this time well disposed towards the Catholic faith, but the burghers of Thonon remained obstinately Protestant, and they strove by every means in their power to hinder conversions. In Father Chérubin these men were to find a type of adversary very different from Francis de Sales. The former was a zealot, not only in his aspirations but in the policy which he used in order to carry those aspirations into effect. He was an eloquent preacher, full of solid learning, and endowed with oratorical force, a man of deep piety, and an apostle who was as brave as he was indefatigable. Where the Provost might have employed a waiting policy, the zeal of the Franciscan made straight for the object he had in view and directed a frontal attack upon any obstacle that arose in his path. In his sermons in the church, and also in his occasional addresses in the public square, he never ceased challenging the minister Viret to a public disputation: driven to desperation, the latter at length agreed to a conference, from which, however, he was forced to retire in manifest discomfort before the eloquence and learning of his redoubtable adversary.

There were at this time in the belfry of St Hippolytus two bells, the larger of which was cracked. Although the Calvinists had practically given up the use of this building for the purposes of worship, they continued to announce the times of their services by means of its bells. To the fiery zeal of Father Chérubin such promiscuity of use seemed sacrilegious, and he immediately sent word to the Duke of Savoy asking for a mandate to stop it. Having apparently received an order in his favour, he lost no time in giving it effect in a rather dramatic fashion.† One day, a short time before the Protestant service was to take place, he went to the church of St Hippolytus, accompanied by Father Esprit and two laymen: having first closed the door, he went up into the belfry and pulled up the bell ropes to the upper platform out of reach of anyone below. He also performed a similar operation on the ladders reaching to his coign of vantage. These dispositions successfully effected, he patiently waited for the Protestants. The latter, on arriving at the church, and finding the doors fastened from within, promptly took measures to force them. Having accomplished this, they made their way to the belfry, but, to their astonishment, found neither ropes to pull nor ladders to scale. At this critical juncture, Father Chérubin revealed himself from his superior position, and informed the astounded Calvinists that he possessed an order from the Duke of Savoy restricting the use of the bells to the needs of the Catholic worshippers. He then went on to justify the order by informing his hearers that it was manifestly unsuitable that the same bell should be used to announce both the preaching of the truth and the preaching of error. The Calvinists may have accepted the truth of this assertion as a general principle, but they objected vehemently to its application in this particular case. Furiously indignant, they immediately rushed off to summon their companions, who, arming themselves in haste, made their way to the scene of action. Failing to receive any satisfaction to their demands, they proceeded to employ the argument of force, and fired several times at Father Chérubin and his confrère, without, however, doing the good fathers any damage. Then they brought ladders with the intention of taking the position by storm, but every time that these were lifted up to the desired place, the friars and their companions succeeded in casting them down. Just as things were getting more and more furious and the Calvinists were talking of undermining the tower and bringing it down in ruins to the ground, there happily arrived on the scene a M. de Vallon, a Protestant nobleman who possessed great influence over his co-religionists. He first of all set himself to moderate the anger of the Calvinists: then, calling aloud to Father Chérubin, he requested the latter to come down from the tower. The Franciscan, however, refused. Showing himself at a window, he presented to his opponents the order of the Duke of Savoy, and asserted that he intended to insist on its execution, even at the peril of his own life. The Protestants, influenced by the advice of M. de Vallon, retired for the time. They had not, however, abandoned their designs. When Father Chérubin eventually left the tower, they, in their turn, went up to the belfry, and having lighted a great fire under the larger of the two bells, strove to break it up with hammers, after having taken the precaution of wrapping it up in sacking, to deaden the sound of the blows. In the meanwhile Father Chérubin was keeping a keen watch upon the church. On looking out of his window, he soon noticed that the Calvinists were at work in the belfry. Hastily summoning Father Esprit, he immediately went in search of the Procurator Fiscal, in order to obtain his intervention. That worthy official, nevertheless, hesitated before the task that was suggested to him: he considered it the height of imprudence to go out in the dark and oppose a number of men, of whose boldness and violent temper he was only too well aware. But Father Chérubin, utterly without fear, insisted, and succeeded in forcing the Procurator to accompany him to the church.

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* C. A. de S., l. iv, p. 244.

† Hamon says he did not wait for the Duke's order; but this is a manifest mistake, because in the subsequent proceedings the good friar shows the order to the Calvinists.

As soon as the Calvinists remarked the presence of their adversaries, they threatened to club them, should the latter attempt to go up into the belfry, and by way of adding reality to these threats pelted the Procurator and the friars with burning brands from their fire. Once more the unhappy official showed signs of wavering, but Father Chérubin running towards the ladder, cried out: "Do not be afraid: the Blessed Virgin will protect us. If we go up boldly, they cannot do us any harm." Accordingly they mounted to the upper platform, where they found the principal burghers of the town gathering together the pieces of the bell, which they had at length succeeded in breaking up. The Procurator ordered them to withdraw, and to deliver up to him the keys of the belfry. To these official commands the burghers thought it prudent to offer no resistance. Acting upon further orders, they even placed the pieces of the broken bell upon carts, and conveyed them to the castle of Allinges, where the metal was to be stored, until it was melted down once more and restored to its original use in the service of the Catholic worship.

A short time after this—just before Christmas, 1597—President Favre paid a visit to Thonon. He had been sent, we learn from one of the Provost's letters, "to discover the feeling of the inhabitants of Chablais as to the exercise of the Catholic worship." Almost all gave testimony that they desired it and were every moment looking forward to its re-establishment. In view of this, President Favre conveyed to the burghers of Thonon an order that they were to attend the preaching of Father Chérubin, and barred the Calvinists henceforth, not only from the use of the church of St Hippolytus, but also from the right of ringing the bell to announce their assemblies.

During the Lent of the year 1598 the Franciscan continued his course of sermons in the church of St Hippolytus. The power of his voice was such that he was easily heard in the houses adjoining that building, and a number of Protestants, who did not venture as yet to listen openly to the friar's sermons, took advantage of this fact to learn in secret something of the Catholic doctrine. The truths which they thus heard gradually won a place in their understandings: further reflection developed a tendency to believe, and faith gradually grew in their souls. These good dispositions were fostered still more by a public conference which took place about this time between Father Chérubin and a Protestant minister, named Hermann Lignarius,* a man of German origin who taught theology at Geneva. The conference took place on March 14, and the subjects discussed were the canonicity of certain books of the Bible and the authority which, in matters of faith, ought to decide the true meaning of Scripture. The discussion, unlike most of these affairs, was this time carried on with great moderation on both sides, and secretaries were present who wrote down both objections and answers. After the disputation had continued for some hours, proceedings were adjourned to the next day. But the next day the Protestant champion failed to appear. Feeling himself completely beaten at the first encounter, he had no stomach for a continuance of the contest, and had promptly taken himself home to Geneva. It was in vain that a further challenge was issued; in vain that this challenge was placarded by posters in every possible place; in vain that the surest guarantees of safe-conduct were issued in the name of the Duke of Savoy: Lignarius and his companions had had enough of it, and preferred to let the matter drop. Finally Baron D'Avully drew up an account of the whole proceedings, and placed it in the hands of the printers for publication.*

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* His real name was Durholz.

It was soon after this conference, and partly as a result of it, that Father Chérubin and Baron d'Avully conceived the idea of celebrating at Thonon the devotion of the Forty Hours, in much the same way that they had already done at Annemasse in the previous year. The celebration was to be followed by theological discussions, to which the Calvinists of Geneva and the neighbourhood would be invited. It was, however, necessary to consult the bishop of the diocese on such an important matter, and accordingly the Franciscan set out on the way to Annecy. On April 8, he arrived at the château of Sales, in order to discuss his proposal with the Provost, who by now was recovered somewhat from his illness and was striving to regain his health in the midst of his family.

It will be remembered that, just as he was about to depart for Rome, Francis had been seized by a violent fever, which brought him to imminent danger of life. During the first days of January, 1598, the invalid had so serious a relapse that for seven days his friends despaired of his life. Mme. de Boisy, who, on hearing of her son's illness, had hastened from Sales to her son's bedside at Annecy, found that the two doctors who had been consulted were divided in their opinion as to his condition. His own doctor, Charrière, had hopes of his recovery, but another well-known physician, who had been called in, was strongly of opinion that there was no hope. So ill and weak did the Provost seem to be that the latter decision was soon held to be the correct one by those who were nursing him, and they thought that Mme. de Boisy ought to inform her son of his danger. When Francis first heard the opinion of the doctor as to his condition, it seems to have come upon him as a shock. His mind, weakened by the strain of fever, could only fasten itself upon the severity of God's judgements: and the sins of his past life, slight though these certainly were, assumed terrible proportions in his imagination. Two thoughts distressed him: one, that he had not done sufficient penance for his faults: the other, that he had not accomplished enough work in the service of our Lord.* In the bitterness of his grief his soul found expression in the words of Scripture and in the prayers of his own thoughts, "*Suffer me, O Lord,*" he cried out, "*that I may lament my sorrow a little, before I go, and return no more, to a land that is dark and covered with the mist of death.* The fear of death disturbs me, for I have sinned daily and have not done penance. Woe is me, O Lord, for I have sinned greatly in my life. *I will let go my speech against myself, I will speak in the bitterness of my soul. I will say to God: Do not condemn me.* O Lord, when thou shalt come to judge the earth, where shall I hide myself from the face of thy wrath? I fear for the sins I have committed and am filled with confusion before thee." Again and again he appealed to the mercy of God. "*Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am weak: heal me, O Lord, for my bones are troubled. Turn to me, O Lord, and deliver my soul: O save me for thy mercy's sake. For there is no one in death that is mindful of thee: and who shall confess to thee in hell? I have laboured in my groanings, every night I will wash my bed: I will water my couch with tears. In the midst of my days I shall go down to the gates of hell. . . . My life is cut off as by a weaver: whilst I was yet but beginning, he cut me off.* Ah!" he exclaimed, "if God would give me back my health, how much better should I employ my life, and what great ardour I should devote to the work of my salvation!" In a short time, however, this condition of foreboding and gloom, due, in all probability, to the weakness of his fever-wasted body, passed away: his thoughts turned with consolation to the contemplation of God's infinite mercy and the power of the merits of Christ. His confidence returned, and placing himself without reserve in the hands of the Divine Providence, he formed in his soul that perfect indifference to life or death which is characteristic of the saints in such crises. "Since at any time of my life, whether early or late, in youth or in old age, I can only obtain my salvation from the goodness and mercy of God, I might just as well throw myself now immediately into the arms of his clemency, as await some other time. The greater part of my journey is done: may our Lord do with me according to his will. My fate is in his hands: let him dispose of me according to his good pleasure."† Then once more he had recourse to Scripture: "*All the ways of the Lord are mercy and truth. Why art thou cast down, O my soul? And why dost thou disquiet me? Hope in God, for I will still give praise to him, the salvation of my countenance and my God.*"

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* Hamon, l. i, p. 295 *et seq* C. A. de S., l. iii, p. 195.

When the rumour that the Provost was dying circulated through the town of Annecy, it caused the greatest grief amongst his friends and acquaintance. The aged Bishop was so upset by the news as to be utterly prostrated and forced to keep his bed. The Canons assembled immediately, and made their way in a body to the sick man's room, in order to see him, as they thought, for the last time and to receive his final blessing. After having given their beloved Provost every assurance of their sympathy for him in his suffering and of their grief in the thought that God was taking him away from them, they begged him to speak a few words to them, as a last legacy from his lips and as a guide to them in their conduct when he should be with them no longer. The Provost, touched by their grief, embraced each one affectionately and thanked them all for the kindness of their visit. He consoled them by saying that he left them in the keeping of him who is the great, real, and universal Pastor of souls, in whom they ought to place all their confidence, rather than in one who, like himself, was but a weak and useless servant. He then went on to speak to them of the uncertainty of life, of the hideousness of vice and the beauty of virtue, of the love and the fear of God. The circumstances under which these words were delivered made them singularly impressive, but, even apart from that, it seemed to the Canons that never had he spoken with such eloquence or risen to such loftiness of thought as when he thus addressed them, weak and worn out by the sickness that had brought him to the gates of death. Each one of them was anxious to speak to him in private and to receive from his lips a special counsel. To this he consented in spite of his weariness, gently notifying to each one the faults that he had remarked, and giving such advice as he thought would be beneficial and helpful. Finally, all knelt down around his bed, and received his blessing. He thanked them once more for their visit and begged them to pray earnestly for him in his trial.

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* Esprit, Part XIV, Sec. xxi.

† *Ibid.*

The strain of this interview was such that for the space of an hour, in spite of every assistance rendered to him, he remained motionless in a state of utter prostration, so that those who were nursing him thought that the end was near. Nevertheless, during all this time he never lost consciousness, and his mind was actively engaged in wrestling against a strange and unexpected temptation. For at this moment his intelligence was assailed by a difficulty against the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament—a difficulty more specious than any which he had met in the books of his religious opponents, and to which for the time he did not see a solution. Feeling that this was an assault of the devil, he countered it by having recourse to acts of faith in the authority of the Church, by frequent invocations of the name of Jesus, and by the sign of the cross. After a time the temptation left him. It may be mentioned at once that afterwards, when he was restored to health, he saw the solution of the difficulty: his prudence, however, refused to tell the nature of the objection to others, because he considered that in some cases the solution might be less easily grasped than the difficulty. Only to his brother Louis did he reveal it, and then, we are told, when he was off his guard; for which want of caution he made reparation by exacting a promise of silence that it should never be told to anyone else.

On the morning after the visit of the Canons, Francis was slightly better, and the musicians of the cathedral came to his house and asked if they might play and sing to him by way of giving him some little pleasure in his illness. The Provost, giving his consent, asked them to sing the hymn in which the Church celebrates the ardent love of St Mary Magdalen for our Lord: *Ardens est cor meum videre Dominum—My soul burns with desire to see the Lord.* When that was finished, he chose the 41st psalm—*As the hart panteth after the fountains of water.* All the time that the choir was singing the Provost followed closely, using the music as an aid to prayer and lifting up his soul in acts of intense desire for God. When the musicians had departed, he turned his face to the wall, and with signs of deepest compunction recited aloud the *Miserere.*

A few moments later, having turned towards those who were nursing him, he noticed that Charrière, his physician, was engaged in preparing some medicine. When he asked the doctor what he was doing, the latter replied in the words of our Lord to St Peter: "*What I do, thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.*" The Provost immediately took him up. "You are profaning sacred Scripture," he answered with energy. "A Christian ought never to use the word of God except with great respect and only with regard to holy things." The prescription which the doctor was preparing was one of those quaint concoctions used in those days and known by the name of *Or Potable*, or Drinkable Gold. A tincture of gold was formed with spirit of wine and the precious metal, which had been reduced by some particular chemical process to a gum of the colour of blood and the consistence of honey: an ounce of this tincture was then mixed with sixteen ounces of other liquors. The remedy thus formed was looked upon as a cordial, possessing sudorific power, and was employed in the treatment of a large number of maladies. Whatever the real virtue of this concoction might have been, certain it is that no sooner had Francis taken it than he experienced a great relief.* From then onwards his sickness steadily diminished, and his health had so far improved by January 14 that he was able to write both to the Nuncio and the Duke of Savoy on behalf of the churches of Chablais.

After Easter Day, which fell that year on March 22, he went home to the château of Sales. He had been there only a few days, when suddenly, on April 1, the plague broke out at Annecy, carrying off numberless victims. Whilst the inhabitants fled from the stricken town in crowds, the Bishop refused to leave. A number of courageous priests, notably Father Jean of Maurienne, a Capuchin, imitated his example and devoted themselves to the help of the sick. On receiving news of this visitation, Francis asked leave from his Bishop to join these heroic men, but the Bishop, instead of granting his request, ordered him to Thonon. The Provost was preparing to leave the château, when Father Chérubin arrived unexpectedly, in order to give Francis an account of his work in Chablais, of his struggle in Thonon, and of the successful conference with Hermann Lignarius. They immediately discussed the proposal to celebrate the Forty Hours at Thonon, deliberated over the founding of a printing press in the diocese, and made a number of other plans such as their zeal suggested.

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* For account of this sickness see C. A. de S., l. iv, p. 246 *et seq.*

Two days afterwards, on April 10, Francis, in a long letter to the Nuncio, wrote: "To-day I am going to Thonon, where I am needed for a short time. While there, I will draw up a list of the people who have returned within the pale of the Church during the last three years for Your Lordship's information, in order that thereby His Holiness may be encouraged to grant us the favours necessary for our enterprise."*

* E.N., Tom. XI, p. 328.

CHAPTER XI*

(1598: April to December)

Francis returns to Thonon—Peace of Vervins—Visit to Sales—Further labours in Chablais—Conversion of F. Bouvier—Visit to Chambéry—Thonon again—Letter to De Mendoça—Miracle of the dead child—Forty Hours at Thonon: first celebration—Arrival at Thonon of the Duke—Pardon of the rebels—Arrival of the papal Legate—Second celebration of the Forty Hours—The Duke's dealings with Swiss envoys—Francis presents memorandum—The Duke deals severely with remnant of Calvinists—Submission of many villages—Berne protests—The Bishop decides to send Francis to Rome—Francis distributes alms from the Duke—Rests at Sales—Sets out for Rome—The Duke's further labours in Chablais—His approval of measures suggested by Francis—The Saint's estimate of Charles Emmanuel

THE joy of the Provost at finding himself once more amongst his Catholics at Thonon was somewhat tempered by disappointment. The number of conversions in the town itself was still much below his expectations. Though the Protestant burghers had grown less insolent and less aggressive, they were still none the less rebellious against the light. The country parts, on the other hand, showed the strongest disposition towards the Catholic faith, and were insistent in their appeals for priests. Unfortunately the Knights of SS. Maurice and Lazarus were becoming more and more obstinate in their selfishness. During the preceding year, instead of the six pensions which they had promised for the parish priests, they had only supplied three, and at the moment of which we are speaking they seemed bent on supplying nothing at all.

At this time there came to the Provost's ears the glad tidings of the peace of Vervins, signed on May 2, 1598. This treaty, between France on the one hand and Spain and her allies on the other, included the Duchy of Savoy. Based on the former treaty of Cateau-Cambresis, it restored to France all those territories lost during the war, and assured to the Duke of Savoy the possession of Chablais and the bailiwick of Ternier. The possession of the Marquisate of Saluzzo, which had been seized by the Duke, but which was claimed by Henry IV, was to be submitted to the arbitration of the Pope. The result of this arrangement as to Chablais and Ternier was to remove all fear of the Bernese from the inhabitants of these two districts, and for those who should choose to embrace the Catholic religion there was no longer any apprehension of being persecuted for their action by a return to power of their Calvinist neighbours in Switzerland. Knowing that this apprehension had been the greatest hindrance to his missionary work, the Provost now looked forward to the future with greater expectations.

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* Hamon, l. ii, chapter vi.

Learning at the same time that President Favre was about to journey to Italy on business for the Duchess of Nemours, Francis hastened to the château of Sales, in the hope that he would be able to undertake his own journey to Rome in the company of his friend. In this, however, he was disappointed: for the Bishop was at this time in quarantine at Vignière, and it was impossible either to interview him or to obtain from him the necessary papers. Consequently the Provost had to content himself with delivering to the President whatever papers and information he could gather together for the use of the Holy Father and the Nuncio. In his letter to the latter, dated from Sales, May 18, he writes: "If, under favour of the peace which is announced, the exercise of Catholic worship is definitely re-established in the bailiwicks, we shall soon obtain a result which any delay might compromise. As to the payment of the six pensions promised by the Knights in 1596, no order has been given except last year for three: and this year for none. It is now time henceforth on the one hand to press Geneva to receive at least the *Interim*, thanks to this peace, and on the other, to undertake a great number of beneficial works in the neighbourhood of that town—the reformation of the abbeys, preaching, disputations, the publication of books and other similar things. For by this means the fox will die in his hole." The *Interim* mentioned was a temporary settlement in matters of religion entered into by Charles V with the Protestants in 1541. It was only to have authority until the holding of a General Council. The Provost's intention in mentioning it in this letter was to recall that by one of its agreements property which had formerly belonged to Catholics was to be restored to them. The letter continues: "Amongst other things we must have a printer at Annecy. The heretics are publishing at every moment the most pernicious books, while several Catholic works remain on the hands of their authors, because these cannot send them with safety to Lyons, and they have no printer at their disposal."*

Eventually, when the Bishop had finished his quarantine, the Provost went down to see him. Returning afterwards to Sales, he again wrote on June 13 to the Nuncio on the subject of the *Interim*, asking that pressure should be brought to bear upon Geneva by the King of France to obtain from that city the opening of its gates to Catholic worship.

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* E.N., Tom. XI, Lettre CIX, p. 334.

About July 10 the Provost returned to Chablais, taking with him a few funds for missionary expenses, and, more important still, a number of priests and canons, destined either as auxiliaries in the work of preaching or as parish priests. During the summer of this year, 1598, he was able to appoint curés to two of the new districts: at Bellevaux he placed Claude Chevallier, one of the two students over whose defensions he had presided at Annecy; at Bons he placed Jean Mangier. The latter he installed himself. It would seem as if, in spite of the favour with which Catholicity was being regarded in the country parts, the Protestant ministers, who were always very active, had succeeded in rearousing the former hostility among the peasants. On the arrival of the Provost and his companion at Bons, they could find no one willing to give them hospitality. The ancient calumny that they were sorcerers, who everywhere bore misfortune with them, had succeeded in doing its work. It was only with difficulty and at exorbitant prices that the new missioners succeeded in obtaining a little coarse bread, made mostly from bran, such as was generally used for feeding the pigs. To this was added a small amount of poor cheese and some water. Not by any persuasions could the inhabitants be induced to sell them a glass of wine. Moreover, this Spartan fare had to be eaten reclining on the ground, for no one would lend them any sort of seat or table. Francis, used to such treatment, rejoiced in these little hardships, glad of the opportunity of imitating the poverty of Jesus Christ. "Such is the apostolic life," he remarked cheerfully: and his companion, worthy of collaborating with such an apostle, bravely accepted the charge of this apparently unattractive parish. Such was the effect of his patience that before long there was a complete change of attitude towards him. The people, finding that the priest was generous and zealous in their service, as well as a man of manifest education and learning, realized that the strictures of the Calvinist ministers had been so many falsehoods. They surrendered to the persuasion of his eloquence and personal virtue, and his work in the parish produced results that outstripped all expectations.*

The Provost was careful not to leave his priests, thus scattered over the wide territory of the mission, in isolation and loneliness. Under ordinary circumstances he would gather them together twice a week at Thonon. There he would give them conferences on various cases of conscience, would listen to their report of the work accomplished, and would advise them in special matters of difficulty. The benefit was twofold, working both for the advantage of the mission and for the better education of the clergy. The priests, on their part, listened to him with pleasure and confidence, realizing that they were dealing with a master mind, and with one who never assumed any kind of superiority over them. Francis, in fact, placed himself ever beneath his fellow-workers, and bore himself as the least amongst them. One of these priests, Marrignier, related in his depositions that one day, when the Provost and himself were journeying about in his parish, the former refused to take the leading part in the recitation of their Office, surrendering it to Marrignier as the curé of the parish. One night, when they were forced to stop at a little inn, where everything was of the poorest and where there was only one bed available, the Provost was as contented with its poor hospitality as if it had been a palace, gladly partook of the rough fare provided, and insisted, in spite of all Marrignier's expostulation, that the latter should take the bed, whilst he himself slept on the floor.

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* C. A. de S., l. iii, p. 177.

It was about this time that François Bouvier, a gentleman who was formerly of Chillon in the country of Vaux, but who had resided for some years in Chablais, was being drawn towards the Church. He had been brought into communication with the Provost by the most curious of chances. One day, when he was hunting in the district of Bellevaux in company with his relative, the Marquis de Lullin, the hounds came back on their tracks with all the appearances of terror. Anxious to see what was the matter, Bouvier made his way forward to the spot whence he guessed the hounds had returned. Presently, to his astonishment, he came upon a large crowd of people, arranged around a priest, who, seated upon a great stone, was preaching the Catholic doctrine to a rapt audience. It was Francis de Sales. The nobleman, drawn by curiosity, stopped to listen, and was struck by the learning and eloquence of the preacher. On several occasions since that date Bouvier had come in secret to visit the Saint, and to confer with him about the subject of religion. He was already greatly impressed by the Catholic doctrine, when the manifest defeat of Lignarius helped still further to convince him of the falseness of the Calvinistic teaching. It was then, however, that he came across a well-known work by Duplessis-Mornay against the Sacrifice of the Mass. This celebrated man, renowned both as an author and a soldier, passed as the cleverest and most learned of the Calvinists of France, and on account of the influence which he wielded amongst the Protestants was familiarly known as the Pope of the Huguenots. Bouvier immediately read his book, and the arguments it contained seemed to him unanswerable. He decided, however, to place it before the Provost. As Francis happened to be out at the moment of his call, he left the book on a table in the Provost's room, after marking those passages which seemed to him the most weighty. When Francis returned home, finding the book upon his table, he immediately went through it: his excellent knowledge of patristic theology soon showed him the many weaknesses of the work, and he quickly noted down a number of its salient errors. Moreover, moved with indignation at several pages full of blasphemy and lies, he tore these from their place in the book. It was not long before Bouvier returned. Francis, on seeing him, shook his head and lifted up his hands. "Never," he said, "have I read a more impudent liar than your Duplessis-Mornay. Have a little patience with me, sir, and you will soon be of the same opinion as myself. But first of all, forgive me for having torn out these pages: look for yourself whether they deserve to see the light of day. See, here is one lie: and here again another. In fact, the book is full of them." He then went on to point out a number of passages from the Fathers, which had been altered, disfigured, and torn from their proper context by the author in the most disloyal fashion. Bouvier, stupefied, could scarcely believe the evidence of his eyes. At length, shaken in his belief in the author's honesty, he found nothing else to answer except that he would ask the ministers of Geneva if they could manage to justify Mornay's pamphlet in any way. This he eventually did, and, finding that the ministers could give him no reasonable answer, decided to make short work of his Calvinism. Francis undertook to instruct him, and with great care gave him a thorough grounding in the doctrine of the Church. When this instruction was finished, Bouvier made his abjuration before the Bishop of Geneva on the occasion of the Forty Hours at Thonon, of which we shall speak later.*

That the Provost's strictures on Mornay's book were not unjust is proved by another incident that took place in France and which had an amusing sequel. The famous Du Perron, Bishop of Evreux, declared in public that he engaged himself to point out more than five hundred falsifications in the pamphlet. Mornay, stung to the quick, accepted this challenge, and a conference took place at Fontainebleau in the year 1600 in the presence of Henry IV himself. The first meeting was held on May 4, before a tribunal of six judges, three of whom were Catholics and three Calvinists, and on the first nine passages chosen judgement was given in favour of Du Perron. Thereupon Mornay, on the plea that he was sick, seems to have withdrawn to his château in Saumur. Henry, more than ever confirmed by this incident in the truth of the Catholic religion, remarked to his famous minister Sully: "The Pope of the Protestants has taken a fall." "You are right in calling him Pope," rejoined Sully in his dry manner, "for he will have made Du Perron a Cardinal." As a matter of fact, the Bishop of Evreux was eventually raised to the purple in 1604.†

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* C. A. de S., l. iii, p. 196. Hamon also quotes De Cambis, Tom. I, p. 267.

† *Vide* note in Hamon, l. i, p. 308, and Cath. Encycl. under *Duperron*.

Whilst Francis was carrying on his work at Thonon, he received a message from his mother informing him that she had just arrived at the château of Brens, and that she and the rest of the family hoped that he would come and visit them. She on her part particularly wished to consult him on several important matters. In spite of his love for his mother and his great desire to see her, Francis realized that his leaving Thonon at that precise moment would be very prejudicial to his work. Consequently he felt himself obliged to refuse. He sent Rolland to her with the following message: " Tell her that I look upon her invitation as a temptation placed before me, without any knowledge or fault on her part, by the enemy of our souls. There are here so many of God's children, who are my brothers and sisters by grace, and who are at present in need of me, that I could not without disloyalty abandon their service in order to procure a little natural enjoyment for my family and myself." Accordingly Madame de Boisy and her children had to resign themselves to returning home without the pleasure of seeing him.

In the meanwhile the first date fixed for the celebration of the Forty Hours was drawing near. Mgr. de Granier, knowing that the function could not take place without the consent and support of the Duke, sent Father Chérubin to Chambéry, in order to obtain the necessary permission. The Duke realized at once the advantages to be derived from the execution of the Bishop's proposal. He not only gave his consent, but engaged himself to pay all the expenses. He gave orders to the governor of the province and to his principal officials to supply, according to their resources, all that was necessary, he himself sending a number of experienced decorators, along with a quantity of very rich hangings in cloth of gold and silver. He furthermore promised that he would also assist at the ceremony, as soon as he had returned from a journey which he was obliged to take to the county of Bresse. At the same time, the Holy Father, in answer to the Bishop's petition, granted a plenary indulgence to all those who should take part in the ceremony, and sent a considerable sum of money towards the expenses of the celebration. The Bishop of Geneva published this indulgence throughout his diocese, and a like publication was made by the Bishops of Sion and Lausanne throughout their territories. In order to add the last touch to the interest of the occasion Father Chérubin invited the ministers of Berne and Geneva to a public conference on religion. The Syndics of Geneva were in favour of the proposal. They urged their best-known theologians to carry on the contest begun by Lignarius, and insisted on the harm that would be done to the cause of the Reformation if this opportunity was refused. Nevertheless, for one reason or another, the ministers failed to accept the challenge.

At the time when Father Chérubin was returning to Thonon, Francis was setting out to Chambéry. This was in obedience to the wishes of the Bishop. It had been decided that the Duke of Savoy and the French Ambassador should in that city solemnly swear to the peace concluded at Vervins, and the Bishops of Geneva, Belley, and Maurienne had been convoked for the occasion. Mgr. de Granier desired to be accompanied by the Provost of his chapter. The ceremony took place on Sunday, August 2, in the church of St Francis, at Chambéry. The next day His Highness had a few minutes' interview with the Provost, fixed the celebration of the Forty Hours for August 15, and promised to attend it himself. He also engaged to show special favour to the new converts, and particularly to the poor amongst them.

On leaving Chambéry, Francis went to Annecy, and thence to Sales, where he wrote a letter to Claude Marin, the Procurator Fiscal, making arrangements for the expenses of the Forty Hours, the board and lodging of the musicians, and the preparation of apartments for the Bishop. The latter had insisted that these should be in the house of a Catholic. Four or five days later Francis set out for Thonon. Scarcely had he arrived than he learnt that the celebration had been deferred to August 23. Still more serious was the news that Don Juan de Mendoça, commander of the Spanish troops in the service of Savoy, was intending to pass through Thonon with his soldiers. The passage of these Spanish troops at this time, especially through a country the inhabitants of which were still mainly Protestant, would have made the holding of the Forty Hours an impossibility. Francis immediately despatched a messenger with a letter for the Commander. After explaining to the Spanish officer the extent of the preparations already made and the great advantages which, it was hoped, would accrue from the celebrations, he goes on to say: "We now learn that your Excellency is preparing to make your return journey by this route with your troops. If this is so, then very certainly the celebration of the Forty Hours will by no means be possible. For the inhabitants, burdened by the billeting of the soldiers, will be unable to assist. On the contrary, they have already resolved that they will leave their houses empty and will cross over to the other side of the lake. As to visitors from outside, these would certainly not come." Francis therefore begs the Commander to take another route. As a further incentive to this he adds: "We will say furthermore that we do not know who can have indicated this route to you: for near the lake, between Evian and Saint Maurice, there is at this season of the floods the most horrible and dangerous passage imaginable."*

An event took place about this time which resulted in a number of conversions. Amongst the Calvinists who attended the Provost's sermons and instructions was a married woman, living in the faubourg St Bon at Thonon. Though she loved to listen to his sermons and found his arguments quite unanswerable, she nevertheless declared that she would never quit her Calvinism, as it was the religion in which she was born. About this time she gave birth to a child, and having unfortunately put off its baptism, was deeply shocked and horrified when it suddenly died without the benefits of the sacrament. Filled with grief, she was on her way to make arrangements for the burial of the child's body, when she met Francis in the road. Immediately, in her distress, she threw herself at his feet and told him all her trouble. "Father," she exclaimed, "I will become a Catholic if by your prayers you can obtain life for the child, so that it can be baptized." Francis went down upon his knees at once and begged God's mercy on the mother and child. His prayer was heard. When the mother returned home, she found her baby alive, and in the transport of her joy carried it at once to the church to have it baptized. It lived for two days afterwards, so that many were able to verify the reality of the miracle. The woman, with her husband and family, made their submission and were received into the Church. A number of Calvinists, on being publicly invited by Father Chérubin to test the genuineness of this wonder, examined everything connected therewith in the most critical manner, attested their belief that it was undoubtedly a miracle, and abjured their heresy.*

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* E.N., Tom. XI, Lettre CXIV, p. 348.

Although all the preparations for the celebration of the Forty Hours were practically complete, difficulties were continually arising to prevent the fixing of a date. It had already been put off twice from dates assigned to it, and processions coming from distant towns had actually set out on their journey, only to be countermanded. The Duke of Savoy failed to arrive, and Cardinal de Medicis, the Pope's Legate in France, who was to pass through Thonon on his return to Italy, and who, it was hoped, would be present at the Quarant' Ore, was also delayed. Eventually the opening day was fixed for Sunday, September 20, and all seemed ready for the event, when, on the 18th, the Duke sent word that he could not be at Thonon until the end of the month, and asked that the Forty Hours should again be deferred to that time. The Bishop immediately informed the missionaries of this latest development. Francis and his companions were of opinion that they ought to celebrate the Forty Hours on the date fixed, and then to have another celebration later on, whenever the Duke and the Legate could come to Thonon. The disadvantage of this plan was that it gave them no time to inform the Prince of their decision and consult his will: some there were who thought it imprudent to seem in any way to disregard his wishes, as his concurrence in the whole missionary work of Chablais was of the very greatest importance. The Bishop, however, settled the question. Feeling sure that the Duke would not disapprove of a measure adopted with the view of securing the greatest good for the people, he decided that the Quarant' Ore should take place on the date fixed and himself immediately proceeded to Thonon.

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* C. A. de S., l. iii, p. 202.

The first task which awaited the Bishop on his arrival was to choose a place suitable for the sermons of the Forty Hours. St Hippolytus was evidently too small. On the other hand, the church of St Augustine, occupied up till then by the Protestants, was of a size out of all proportion with the small number of people using it—a number which was daily growing smaller and smaller. The Bishop, therefore, decided to take possession of this building. He first of all took care that the high-altar stone, which the Bernese had removed to the Town Hall when they established the Protestant religion at Thonon, was replaced to its proper position. Then with all the ceremony possible he reconciled the church, and restored it to the use of Catholic worship. On September 19, the Saturday in Ember week, he administered the Sacraments of Confirmation and Holy Orders—rites which had not been celebrated in that town for sixty-three years. He also consecrated a number of altar stones, and blessed some vestments and road-side crosses: these last were destined to be reared by the side of the high roads throughout Chablais, and Mgr. de Granier gave orders that each procession, coming to Thonon for the Forty Hours, should on its departure carry with it one of these crosses, to be placed on a spot designed beforehand. Then, seeing that the largest church would be insufficient to hold the vast crowds expected for the Quarant' Ore, he commanded that a large oratory, similar to that used at Annemasse, should be erected close to the church, for the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. Finally, as experience had proved at Annemasse that the representation of some sacred drama, in harmony with the general occasion, was of the greatest use in attracting strangers and in giving the great crowd some form of recreation in the midst of their devotions, Father Chérubin undertook to build near the oratory a suitable stage and auditorium.

Already the pilgrims were arriving from every direction, and on the eve of September 20, the day fixed for the opening of the Forty Hours, the walls of Thonon enclosed an enormous number of strangers. These came not only from the neighbouring provinces such as Savoy, Burgundy, the cantons of Switzerland, Valais, Bresse, and the town of Aosta, but even from more distant countries. It was in the midst of this concourse of people that, on the morning of September 20, the ceremony began with the celebration of High Mass by the Bishop of Geneva, and with the general procession, during which the prelate carried the Blessed Sacrament in triumph through the principal streets of the town. At the head of the procession marched a long line of ecclesiastics, and behind the canopy the Governor of the province, the Avoyer of Fribourg, the nobility of the province, and the immense gathering of the people. After a long round of the streets they eventually drew up before the oratory, which had been erected in the public square near the church, and when the Bishop had there exposed the Blessed Sacrament, the long succession of watches, arranged as at Annemasse, carried on the devotions for the prescribed space of time. One after another the various pilgrimages arrived and took up their duty of adoration in the oratory, aided by sermons from the Provost and his fellow-workers. Amongst the many pilgrimages, whose names are recorded by the historians of this event, we may mention that of St Cergues, bearing with them their cross: this cross had been hidden by devout Catholics between two walls during the occupation by the Calvinists, and was now brought forth in triumph with the hopes of the new era. Another pilgrimage came from Evian, some of the members of which bore representations of the instruments of the Passion: these people, while awaiting their turn to watch, went to the theatre, erected near the oratory, where they listened for a long time to one of their companions, who, kneeling before them on the stage, spoke eloquently to them of the Passion. One of the pilgrimages, that of the bailiwick of Ternier, arrived much later than had been expected, and deep was the feeling among the Catholics when it was learned that this delay was caused, not by the distance of the journey, but by an attack made upon the pilgrims by some of the people of Geneva, as the pilgrimage was passing near the city ramparts. In spite of this adventure these good people spent a great part of the night in going to confession and in hearing the instructions of Francis, Father Chérubin, and Canon Louis, whose sympathetic zeal overcame all sense of weariness. Father Saunier, the Jesuit, and Father Galesius, of the Order of Minors, were equally indefatigable in their ministrations. It would be impossible to relate all the wonderful favours of grace obtained by the admirable labours of the missionaries, aided by the help and example of the aged Bishop. The people prayed with the manifest intention of forcing the hand of God by a holy importunity: it seemed impossible that such devotion could fail to obtain the benefit of many conversions and the reunion of the people of the country in a body with the ancient Church.

The members of the provincial gentry were by no means the least zealous in this contest of piety. They also, under the leadership of Jerome de Lambert, the Governor, had their procession and hour of adoration. As they entered the church, they were met by Francis at the door, and M. de Lambert immediately knelt down before him. "Ah, sir," said the Governor, "you are our father: give us your blessing, and offer us to God." Francis, hastening to lift him up, conducted him and his party into the presence of Mgr. de Granier, in order that they might receive the Bishop's blessing: then he led them before the altar of the Blessed Sacrament.*

The solemnity of the Forty Hours was found to be of benefit, not only to the Catholic pilgrims and to those who had come to make their abjuration, but also to a number of Calvinists, who, while well disposed towards the faith, had not been hitherto sufficiently courageous to attend openly the preaching of the Catholic missionaries. Now, under cover of the darkness, and in the midst of the great crowds, these people made their way to the Oratory, and assisted at the sermons which were being almost continually preached for the benefit of the various pilgrimages. Thus they were enabled to hear Catholic doctrine at first hand, many of their difficulties and prejudices were destroyed, and a valuable preparatory work for their final reception into the Church was accomplished.

The Quarant' Ore ended, as it had begun, with a public procession through the streets, when the Blessed Sacrament was taken back to its permanent resting-place in the Church of St Augustine.

This was not the end, however, of the Provost's labours. He spent the rest of that day in catechizing some forty people, who, after a long resistance, had at length decided to make their abjuration. These were still in need of instruction, in order to enlighten them in their final doubts and to confirm them in the proper spirit of devotion for their reception into the Church. This work accomplished, Francis presented them to the Bishop, who received their abjuration and gave them the customary absolution from heresy. The Provost then begged Mgr. de Granier to confer upon them the Sacrament of Confirmation: many of them, he urged, having come from a distance, and being obliged to return home at once, would be unable to wait till the morrow; and being still weak in the faith, they had great need of the strengthening effects of the Sacrament. This request at once aroused opposition on the part of some of the Bishop's household, who represented that in the state of weariness to which the celebration had reduced Mgr. de Granier, it would be simple cruelty to burden him any further. Someone went so far as to suggest with spiteful mockery that the Provost wanted to kill the Bishop with fatigue for the obvious benefit of his own ambition. Francis, with his usual calmness of temper, replied: " I trust to the goodness of God that the Bishop will feel no ill effects from this task." As a matter of fact, the Bishop, acceding to his request, confirmed the forty converts and sent them away happy and strong in their new faith.†

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* *Année de S. F. de S.*, Sep. 22.

† *Année de S. F. de S.*, Sep. 24. For Charles Auguste's account of the Forty Hours, *vide* l. iii, p. 203.

That same day the Bishop, before taking any rest, wrote to the Duke of Savoy, in order to inform the Prince of the motives which had influenced him in his decision not to delay any further the celebration of the Forty Hours. He also gave the Prince an account of the excellent results which had been obtained, assuring him that these, nevertheless, would be as nothing compared to what would be likely to happen when he himself came to Thonon. Balthasar Magnilier, curé of Annemasse, who was commissioned to convey this letter to the Prince, with two others from Francis and Father Chérubin, found His Highness at Chambéry, and gave him a detailed account of all that had taken place. "In view of the favourable disposition of the people's mind at the present moment," he added, "there is every reason to hope for the conversion of the whole province, if Your Highness assists at the solemnity of the Forty Hours, and if you make use of the whole of your influence in favour of the Catholic religion, without stopping to consider certain political arguments which your council might put forward in the contrary sense." "May God be ever praised and blessed," answered the Duke, "for all the good which he has done and will do still further in my States." Then, placing his hand upon the cross which he wore as Grand Master of the Order of the Annunciation, he added: "I wish to spare nothing, not even my own blood, for the exaltation of the holy cross and for the conversion of my subjects. I will and intend that the Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman religion be the only one publicly exercised in my states, regardless of what people may say. I am going to Bresse. On my return I will write to the Bishop of Thonon, and will let him know when to begin the prayers of the Forty Hours." Then the Prince handed over to the curé an order of September 24, 1598, by which he commissioned Francis to distribute alms at Ripaille and Filly. He knew that this mission would rejoice the heart of the Provost, assisting him in his work amongst the poor, and giving him further opportunities to instruct them in their religion. As the Duke presented this order to the curé, along with a short answer to Father Chérubin, he said: "Recommend me to the prayers of His Lordship of Geneva and his worthy fellow-workers. I shall be with them soon."*

As a matter of fact his journey to Bresse was of short duration. He found the papal Legate at the village of Chanaz, on the banks of the Rhône, and returned with him to Chambéry, whence he issued orders for their reception at Thonon. He informed the Bishop of Geneva that the Cardinal would arrive at that town on September 30, and that all ought to be in readiness to begin the Quarant' Ore on Thursday, October 1. He announced that he himself would be at Thonon two days before the arrival of the Legate.

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* Hamon gives no reference for this: Pérennès gives amongst others *Vie de Claude de Granier*, p. 186.

It was on the morning of September 28 that the ducal courier reached Thonon, announcing the Prince's arrival during the afternoon of the same day. This courier also gave out that the Duke intended to place on their trial all those people of the town who, in the year 1594, had called in the Bernese and Genevans, had thrown off the yoke of the Catholic garrison, and had destroyed the castle which sheltered it. The preoccupation of war had hitherto prevented Charles Emmanuel from punishing the authors of this treason: but now that he was left free to act by the signing of the peace, he was resolved to visit his anger upon all those who had revolted.* On hearing this news, the Calvinists of the town were seized with consternation. Their consistory was summoned in haste, and after a short deliberation could think of no better means of meeting the emergency than that of seeking the intervention of the Bishop, who alone would have sufficient influence with the Duke to appease the latter's wrath. Accordingly they immediately made their way to the Bishop's apartments, where M. de Vallon, speaking on behalf of the consistory, explained the seriousness of the predicament in which he and his fellows now found themselves. The good Bishop listened to him with all kindness, consented to intercede for them, and promised to do so with the zeal of a father for his beloved children. Without losing a moment, without even finishing the meal which he had just begun, Mgr. de Granier set out with his new clients to fulfil his mission of charity. Accompanied by his Vicar-General, M. de Chissé, and by Francis de Sales, he made his way out of the town, followed by the Calvinist consistory and a number of the noblemen and burghers of Thonon. Their meeting with the Duke's party took place at some little distance from the town. As soon as the Prince perceived the Bishop of Geneva, he dismounted from his horse, and holding out his hand to the Prelate greeted him affectionately. Great was his surprise when Mgr. de Granier knelt down before him and in most moving terms begged the Prince's pardon on behalf of those who had offended, protesting that he would not rise from his knees until the Duke had granted his petition. At the sight of the venerable old Bishop pleading thus for those who hitherto could only have been regarded as his bitter enemies, the Duke was deeply moved, and, in spite of his determination to punish the offenders, allowed the prerogative of mercy to oust his anger. Gently lifting the prelate from his knees, he assured him that, out of consideration for his person and his petition, no further steps should be taken in the matter and that all those concerned should receive pardon. The Bishop, in answer to this act of clemency, expressed the depth of their gratitude, and, praising the Duke's love for his subjects, begged him to continue to make its effect felt throughout the whole of Chablais. "I promise you," answered the Duke, "that I will do all the good that you shall propose to me. I will do it out of love for my people, and out of my regard for the recommendations of a prelate who has all my esteem and all my affection."

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* Pérennès, l. iii, chap. xvi, p. 338.

The conduct of the Bishop in this affair gained him every heart. It touched even the most prejudiced of the Calvinists and such as were most inflexibly fixed in their own religious opinions, thus effecting a lasting good by disposing their minds towards a reconciliation with the Catholics.*

The next day was mainly devoted by Francis to the preparation of his opening sermon for the Forty Hours. In spite of the closest concentration, however, he found the greatest difficulty in producing anything that would be worthy of the occasion. It seemed as though God, who chooses at times to humiliate those dear to him for their greater sanctification, willed on this occasion to leave his brain in a state of utter sterility. "Never," he said to Canon Louis de Sales, "has my mind experienced such distraction and want of power: I could draw nothing from it. Nevertheless, I have no anxiety about the matter. God will act and speak through me, if he wills that I should say something useful for his glory and the good of souls: or his goodness will make me love my confusion and humiliation if I am left without ideas or words. I offer myself to him equally for the one or the other." Nevertheless, as he knew that the preaching of the word should ever be treated with respect, and that he who does not prepare as fully as possible is guilty of tempting God, he shut himself up alone in order to meditate with greater fruit the subject he had chosen for his sermon, and did not leave his rooms until the next day.†

September 30 was the date appointed for the arrival of the Legate. Mgr. de Granier, accompanied by the Bishop of St Paul, and by all the clergy of the district, went out in procession for the distance of a league in order to meet and welcome him. The meeting took place with all the ceremony due to the occasion, and then the Cardinal, escorted by the bishops and clergy, made his way to the gates of Thonon, where the Duke of Savoy, supported by his guards and all his courtiers, was awaiting the arrival of his distinguished guest. As soon as the customary greetings were concluded, the Legate was conducted to the church of St Hippolytus, there to adore the Blessed Sacrament, and was then taken to the Town Hall, where state apartments had been prepared for him. Shortly afterwards the Duke of Savoy came to call upon him, accompanied by Francis de Sales and a number of noblemen. The Bishop then gave the Legate an account of the progress of religion in his diocese, relating the efforts that had been made and the excellent results that had followed thereon: the Cardinal, delighted to hear such a favourable report, congratulated Mgr. de Granier warmly, embraced him twice, thanked him in the name of God for the work which he had accomplished, and added that he himself would faithfully pass on that report to the Holy Father. "Yes," added the Duke of Savoy, "this worthy bishop is the apostle of the whole province. I will support him with all my authority, and, if need be, even with my life." Then, introducing Francis de Sales to the Legate, he went on: "My Lord, here you have the real apostle of Chablais. He is a man of God, sent to us by heaven. He it is who, inflamed by a great zeal for the salvation of souls, ventured into this country alone at the peril of his life, sowed here the seed of the word of God, tore up the cockle, planted the cross and the faith of our Saviour in these districts, whence more than seventy years ago they had been uprooted and cast out by the hellish armies of the heretics. I have, indeed, brought hither my sword in order to support so holy an undertaking, but no one can deny that all the merit of this good work is due to this zealous missionary." Francis, overwhelmed with confusion at hearing himself thus praised, could answer nothing, but fell on his knees before the Cardinal and kissed the hem of that prelate's robe in token of respect. The Legate, bending down, lifted him up, embraced him and said: "Sir, I thank you for your zeal. Continue as you have begun. As for me, in accordance with the fulfilment of my charge, I shall not fail to report fully to our Holy Father all that you have accomplished."* The praise bestowed upon Francis by the Duke was the cause of the greatest surprise to all the noblemen present, but especially to those who were Protestant, for it had not generally been known that Charles Emmanuel held the Provost in such esteem. The congratulations of the Cardinal still further increased the Saint's confusion, which was not lessened by the fact that the courtiers immediately proceeded to echo the sentiments of their superiors. Francis hastened to make his escape, and sought out the good Father Chérubin, in order to beg the latter to take his place the next day at the opening sermon. "These praises that have been lavished upon me have so upset me and made me feel so ashamed that I could not possibly be the first to appear before this august assembly." Father Chérubin, a saint himself, who understood the Provost's distress, consented to his wish.†

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* Hamon quotes *Vie de Claude de Granier*, pp. 187 and 319.

† Hamon gives no reference. Pérennès gives the *Année*, Sep. 30, but I could not find the fact there in my copy.

Whilst these things were happening, the last touches were being put to the decorations of the church of St Augustine. The whole of the nave was graced with costly hangings of cloth of gold and silver, relieved by violet curtains of rich velvet. On the right was the pulpit. Opposite this a dais had been constructed for the Legate and the Duke of Savoy, whose thrones were surmounted by a canopy of cloth of gold. The choir had been changed into a kind of inner chapel. Gilded doric columns supported a large half-dome, the ceiling of which was painted to represent the sky at night—a deep blue background with stars of gold that sparkled in the radiance of innumerable lights. From the middle of the choir there rose in gentle gradation a series of steps leading to the altar, upon which stood a tabernacle of precious metals, surmounted by a throne, and surrounded by candles, flowers, statues, and other ornaments.

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* C. A. de S., l. iii, p. 206.

† Pérennès, l. iii, chap. xvii, p. 341.

On Thursday morning, October 1, the Duke again called upon the Legate, this time in order to conduct him to St Hippolytus, where a number of converts were to make their abjuration. Arrived at the church, the Cardinal put on his vestments and sat down in front of the altar with his face towards the people. A short distance from him, to one side, was seated the Duke of Savoy. There were also present in the chancel Mgr. de Granier, four other bishops, and a crowd of ecclesiastical dignitaries. The Knights of the Order of the Annunciation and the diocesan theologians had special places reserved for them, whilst the gentlemen of the two courts stood grouped behind the benches of the choir. The body of the church was packed by serried ranks of the faithful, and outside the door the street was filled with another great crowd of people who had been unable to gain admission to the church. When all was ready, the new converts were conducted before the Legate, and the minister Petit gave an address in their name, speaking for more than an hour and expounding the motives which had led them to seek reception into the ancient faith. He developed especially the three points of the Church's unity, apostolicity, and sanctity. This being concluded, he made his abjuration and received absolution from heresy and censure. The others, amongst whom was the Seigneur de Foras, a number of the noblemen of Chablais and of the burghers of Thonon, also made their submission and received absolution. The function was concluded by the chanting of the *Te Deum* as a solemn act of thanksgiving.

The Mass which opened the celebration of the Forty Hours was solemnized by the Bishop of Geneva, supported by the combined choirs of the chapels of the Legate and the Duke: it was followed by the procession in which the Blessed Sacrament was carried to the church of St Augustine. It was in this building that the forty hours' adoration was to take place. The streets by which the procession was to pass had been decorated in the most lavish manner with hangings, pictures, masses of flowers and plants of all possible kinds. The canopy was borne by the Duke of Savoy, his brother Amédée, Marquis de St Rambert, and the two Avoyers of Fribourg. Beneath this walked the Bishop of Geneva, bearing the Blessed Sacrament in a monstrance that glittered with pearls, diamonds, and precious stones. Immediately behind the canopy came the Cardinal Legate, accompanied by the other prelates, the noblemen and officers of the two courts, and the recently converted burghers of Thonon, now affiliated to the confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament. Behind these again came the long lines of the faithful, who had come from every part of the duchy for the occasion. At a certain point of the route an altar of repose had been erected. Close to this there rose a solid triumphal arch, surmounted by a pyramid, on the summit of which stood a castle, flanked by four towers, and defended by artillery. At the moment when the Legate passed beneath the arch, a kind of scenic fly, painted to represent a cloud, parted in the middle and disclosed the descending figure of a dove, holding in its claws two illuminated addresses, one for the Legate and the other for the Duke of Savoy. The compliment devised for the Legate had this interest, that it foretold the Cardinal's elevation to the Papacy. Inasmuch as the day was now far advanced, it was thought well not to stop at the altar of repose, and the procession passed on. As it prepared to do so, a three-banked galley, ingeniously supported in the air, was seen to float towards the castle, which it attacked with a vigorous cannonade. To this the castle replied in kind and with such intensity that the street was filled with smoke, and, so we are assured by the chronicler, a number of people, who were not prepared for such a realistic battle, were filled with alarm. We take it that this little medieval drama was intended to celebrate the Duke's victory in driving the Genevans from Chablais; or it may possibly have been a subtle suggestion for the future of an attack upon Geneva itself. If so, it was unfortunate that the inglorious "Escalade" of after-events should have been even dimly represented on such a happy and religious occasion.

In the meanwhile the procession went on its way towards the church of St Augustine. Here, before the doorway, had been erected a representation of a mountain, throwing up fire from its summit, while from its base there flowed a stream of limpid water—an allegory of the Church, which burns continually with the love of charity towards God, and at the same time pours forth upon the earth the living streams of its sanctifying doctrine. When the procession entered the church, beneath a blaze of illumination and to the accompaniment of sacred music from the double choir, the Blessed Sacrament was carried to the chapel prepared within the chancel and placed upon the throne for the adoration of the people. Then all took their places to listen to the sermon preached by Father Chérubin from the text: "*Who shall declare the powers of the Lord?*

Who shall set forth all his praises?" (Ps. cv 2). Applying these words to the marvels of the Blessed Sacrament, the preacher expounded the proofs for the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist with force and eloquence.

The Legate afterwards expressed his great satisfaction with this sermon: nevertheless, as he had been expecting to hear Francis de Sales on this occasion, he enquired of Mgr. de Granier the reason for the change of programme, and spoke of the disappointment it had caused him. The Bishop explained the reasons which had led the Saint to make his request of Father Chérubin and which had induced the Franciscan to grant it, and then went on to assure the Cardinal that it would not be long before Francis took his place in the pulpit.* As a matter of fact, the Provost preached the second sermon, and during the next two days addressed the crowds in the church no fewer than ten times, speaking on the various texts applicable to the Blessed Sacrament and explaining their meaning. Amongst the passages thus chosen we may mention the following: "*Do this in commemoration of me*"; "*The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life*"; "*It is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing.*"

As soon as the Blessed Sacrament was exposed, the pilgrimages from the various districts began to arrive with the same frequency as on the former occasion. Profiting, however, by experience, the arrival and departure of each procession was so timed as to avoid the inconveniences and disorder arising from the presence in the town of too great a number of pilgrims. As each procession arrived it was conducted first of all to the Place de la Halle and the Hôtel de Ville, there to do reverence to a large stone cross, erected in the public square by Father Chérubin, and bearing the same inscription as the cross of Annemasse. The second reason for the passing of each pilgrimage before the Hôtel de Ville was to pay a fitting compliment to the Cardinal Legate, who had been given apartments in that building, and who was delighted at the sight of so many Catholics in a place which had been for so long a time the stronghold of Protestantism. From the Hôtel de Ville the procession was then led to the church of St Augustine, where the pilgrims received an instruction either from the Provost or from one of his co-operators. Finally, when this instruction was ended, they would take their turn of watching before the throne.

In the afternoon, about two o'clock, the Legate, accompanied by the Duke of Savoy, returned to St Hippolytus, there to receive the abjuration of a number of Calvinists who sought admission into the Church. Amongst these was an old man of ninety years of age, who had caused himself to be carried to Thonon, in order to receive absolution from heresy. Brought up in the Catholic Faith until his twentieth year, he had abandoned its practice under the threat of force while still preserving for it in his heart a deep affection. He had never ceased to desire the re-establishment of the ancient faith, in order that he might have the opportunity of embracing it once more. Now his desires were to be fulfilled. Arrived at the church, he pushed his way through the crowd with an eagerness that attracted the attention of all, threw himself down at the feet of the Legate, and having received absolution, cried out that now he would die content, since he had received the fulfilment of his wishes.

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* Pérennès, l. iii, chap. xvii, p. 346.

This first ceremony was followed by another, in which five or six hundred people pronounced their abjuration: then by a third, and afterwards by many more, so that it became necessary to keep someone continually occupied in receiving the crowds into the church. The Legate reconciled a certain number himself: then, when at last weariness forced him to desist, he begged the Bishop of Geneva and the Provost to take his place.

On the second day of the Forty Hours the Duke, wearing the collar and mantle of the Order of the Annunciation, went to the church of St Hippolytus, to assist at Father Chérubin's Mass. When the moment for communion arrived, the Prince, accompanied by his brother Amédée, by the Marquis de Lullin, and a number of the gentlemen of the court, presented himself at the altar rails. Deeply stirred by this sight, Father Chérubin, holding the Blessed Sacrament in his hands, addressed the communicants in such moving words as to touch many of those present to tears. When the Mass was finished, the Duke and his suite went to the church of St Augustine, to take a watch before the Blessed Sacrament. He again returned there at two o'clock, and after praying for some time in the oratory, attended a sermon preached by Father Galesius. Taking as his text the words of the Psalmist—*I rejoiced at the things that were said to me: we shall go into the house of the Lord*—he demonstrated eloquently that the Roman Church is the one house of the Lord, because alone amongst the sects it possesses the characters of the true Church.

Towards the evening the Prince completed his day by attending a last ceremony. In former times there had stood in the rue de la Croix a remarkably fine Calvary, which had been pulled down and destroyed by the Calvinists. This Calvary Francis resolved to restore, and had ordered that a large cross should be made in time for its erection during the Forty Hours. When finished, it was placed for the time in the church of St Hippolytus. On this evening, therefore, the brothers of the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament came in procession to carry it from St Hippolytus to the place in which it was to be reared. A great concourse of people followed them. When the procession arrived at the rue de la Croix, it found the Duke, accompanied by several bishops, waiting to assist at the ceremony of the erection. Not content with looking on, the Prince himself took a part in putting the cross in position and in lifting it up in its place. No ropes or instruments of any kind were used, and the fact that so heavy a piece of wood was lifted apparently with ease into its position was looked upon as a veritable miracle. As the cross rose up above the heads of the people, the trumpeters, drummers, and musketeers attached to the Duke's court gave it the proper salute. Charles Emmanuel then advanced to the foot of the cross, knelt there for some moments in prayer, and finally kissed it with devotion. His example was followed by all the bishops, clergy, and laity who were present. After the solemn chanting of the *Te Deum*, Francis led the way to the church of St Augustine, that everyone might once more pay a visit of adoration to the Blessed Sacrament.* On this occasion the Duke refused to go to the dais prepared for him, and, desirous of greater privacy and recollection, took his place in one of the choir stalls, where he assisted at a sermon delivered by Father Chérubin. The Franciscan chose as his subject the honour due both to the Holy Eucharist and to the Cross, the two mysteries so intimately connected one with the other. He proved from the monuments of history how ancient was the custom among Christians of erecting crosses in the public squares, by the roadside, on the summit of buildings, in every place where the tide of human life passed by; and he reminded his audience that zeal for the exaltation of the Cross was hereditary in the house of Savoy, which had merited by its valour against the infidels to bear the white cross upon its escutcheon. The end of the Forty Hours was now drawing near. The Duke decided to assist at the prayers of the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament, and remained in the church until two o'clock in the morning. Then the closing ceremony took place. Francis preached the final sermon, and the Blessed Sacrament was borne in procession back to the church of St Hippolytus. Once again the Duke carried the canopy, assisted by one of the Avoyers of Fribourg and by the Seigneurs of Watteville and of Grand Cour, and the procession passed on its way through streets crowded with the faithful and lit up with a blaze of lanterns, torches, and lights.

The Cardinal Legate took his departure on October 3, the Duke striving by every means to do him honour and to thank him for the favour of his presence at such an auspicious occasion.

In the meanwhile envoys from the cantons of Berne and Fribourg, and also from the city of Geneva, had arrived at Thonon, to seek audience of the Prince. Those of Fribourg, who had come mainly to congratulate the Duke upon the re-establishment of Catholicism in the province, and who, as we have seen, had taken part in the religious celebrations, were received with marked honour and favour by Charles Emmanuel. With the others it was somewhat different. During their audience with the Prince, after they had spoken of several purely political matters, they went on to ask that he would allow the Calvinistic worship the same liberty in Chablais as he had granted to Catholicism, and that to this end he would tolerate the presence in that country of at least three ministers. To this the Duke retorted: "When you took possession of this province, you forced the people to embrace your new opinions. Now, when I have recovered it by the justice of arms, and when almost all my subjects have expressed the desire that I should re-establish the ancient and true religion upon its former footing, you can hardly find it strange that I, their lawful sovereign, should claim the right of regulating the affairs of religion according to their desires, if such seems good to me." The Swiss envoys, finding nothing to say to this retort, retired in disappointment.*

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* C. A. de S., l. iii, p. 212.

Nevertheless, the matter was not yet finally settled. The Prince was not without doubts as to the situation. There still remained a difference between the crowns of France and Savoy about the possession of the Marquisate of Saluzzo: with the possibility of a French war before him, it would be very impolitic for Charles Emmanuel to provoke the Protestants of Switzerland and to supply Henry IV with further allies. It might be prudent to make them a few concessions which, however disagreeable to him personally, were rendered advisable by the political situation. This was the opinion, not only of his statesmen, but even of several learned and virtuous ecclesiastics. In order to settle the matter, Charles Emmanuel convoked his council for the next day, October 4, and sent a message to Francis, summoning him to attend. On the morning of the council the Prince, attended by the whole of his court, assisted at the first mass of a priest, newly ordained at Thonon, stood as godfather at the baptism of a poor peasant's child, and was present at the abjuration of three or four hundred people from the parishes of Bons and Saint-Didier. Francis, on his part, prayed with all the earnestness which so important an affair demanded: for the decision to be taken that day would definitely decide the ultimate success or failure of all his labours in Chablais. He commended the matter during his Mass in a very special manner to his patron, St Francis of Assisi, whose feast the Church was celebrating that day. When the council at last met, it was found that most of those who gave their opinions first, bearing in mind the political rather than the religious point of view, advised that three Protestant ministers should be left, one for Thonon, another for Bons, and the third for Nernier. At length it came to the Provost's turn to speak. "Monseigneur," he said, with apostolic boldness, "to leave the Protestant ministers in this province is to lose the land that belongs to us: and, what is more, is to lose heaven, a foot of which is worth the whole earth in its entirety. There can be no alliance between Jesus Christ and Belial. The ministers are only allowed to reside in this country at present by tolerance, and nothing obliges you to keep them here against the interest of your people." The Duke appreciated this advice and was manifestly inclined to adopt it. One of the members of the council, however, ventured to reiterate the warning that it was imprudent to cause discontent among the Bernese, who, in case of a rupture with France, might invade the province from their side. "The less we have of the earth, the more we shall gain of heaven," answered the Prince. "Let the ministers leave the country, and let no one speak to me about the matter again."*

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* De Baudry, *Relation Abrégée*, chap. xxvii. C. A. de S. (l. iii, p. 213) gives a somewhat different version of the Prince's answer. Hamon also quotes De Cambis, Tom. I, p. 299.

After the council the Duke gave a banquet to the Swiss envoys, and during its course the representatives of Berne, who were nothing if not persistent, renewed their request in favour of the three ministers. "Very well, then, I consent," answered the Prince: "but on the condition that you will receive at Berne the priests whom it shall please me to send there." This witty retort checkmated the envoys and revealed the whole situation at a stroke. It was one thing to have ministers at Thonon, but quite another to have priests at Berne. If anyone was to accuse the Duke of intolerance, it could hardly be the rulers of Calvinism.†

When the Swiss envoys had departed, the Duke proceeded to turn his attention to a memorandum, already presented to him by the Provost, in which a number of petitions were made for the benefit of religion in the neighbourhood. In this memorandum Francis begged His Highness, firstly, to grant an entire suspension of the revenues of all the benefices in the province, so that these might be diverted to the upkeep of the parish priests and other ecclesiastics needed for the instruction of the people, the administration of the sacraments and the government of the parishes, or at least to ordain that the revenues of the benefices with cure of souls should be consecrated to the upkeep of the ecclesiastical staff of the province, and that the revenues of the benefices without cure of souls should be applied for three years to the rebuilding and refitting of the churches and to the other necessities of religious worship, such as the people were unable to supply themselves on account of the present distress and poverty. He asked, secondly, that the Protestant teacher at Thonon should be dismissed and his place filled by a Catholic; that an order should be issued for the execution of a certain legacy providing for the support of twelve poor Catholic scholars; that the law forbidding people to send their children out of the country for the purpose of education should be renewed; that Protestants should henceforth be excluded from all public charges, offices, ranks, and dignities, which they had in the past abused for the persecution of Catholics or the dissemination of their errors; that the Protestant minister should be dismissed from Thonon as soon as possible; and, finally, that to all the Catholics living in the town should be granted the title of burghers, with the power to assist at assemblies and councils, the right to a vote therein, and a full participation in all the other privileges of citizenship.* To all these requests the Duke gave a favourable reply. With regard to the matter of the benefices, he issued express orders by letters patent to his Procurator Fiscal, Claude Marin: unfortunately the Senate and the Chamber of Finances, influenced doubtless by consideration for the Knights who possessed these benefices, put forward certain reasons against the registration of these letters and so prevented their being carried into effect; consequently it was necessary, as we shall see later, to take the case to Rome, in order to obtain an annulment of the grant of the church revenues to the Order of SS. Maurice and Lazarus. With regard to the second petition, the Duke observed that several of its items had already been arranged. He had forbidden by general decree that anyone should send children outside his states for education without his express permission; he had just banished the ministers from the province; and, with regard to the other matters, his wishes could be summarized by saying that he intended to prohibit the exercise of the Protestant religion in his States both in public and in private. Finally, by letters of the same date, he commissioned M. Claude d'Angeville, Primicerius of the collegiate church of La Roche, prior of Douvaine, and the Procurator Fiscal, Claude Marin, to make an inventory of all benefices, to seize them, and to use them in accordance with the intentions and orders either of the Bishop or of the Provost.

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* *Relation Abrégée*, chap. xxvii. C. A. de S., l. iii, p. 214. Hamon quotes D. Jean de S. François, p. 217; also art. 23 of dep. of St Jane Frances.

† C. A. de S., l. iii, p. 114. Also *Relation Abrégée*, chap. xxvii.

In the meanwhile there remained at Thonon a certain number of Calvinists, who had not made their submission. Some were of the poorer classes: against these the Duke did not intend to act with any severity, considering that they had been led astray by others, that they themselves exercised little influence, and that in all probability they would ultimately allow themselves to be persuaded by the instructions of the missionaries and by the example of the Catholics. Others there were, however, among the upper classes, either noblemen or burghers, who by their rank, means, and example were in a position to exert a considerable ascendancy over others. To be too lenient with these, the Duke considered, would be a fault both against religion and politics: so long as they remained Calvinists, so long would they wield their influence not only on behalf of the Protestant religion, but also in support of the political aspirations of the Genevans. He was loth to force them to change their religion, because he knew that such a change should be the work of a free mind: but there were a number of these Calvinists who had utterly refused to attend the Catholic instructions, and the Duke intended, as a preliminary, to use pressure upon them to conform at least so far as to alter this refusal. He had such trust in the truth of the Catholic Faith as to believe that they had only to hear it placed before them, stripped of the distortions of prejudice and accompanied by its strong array of arguments, and they would immediately be induced by reason and conscience to embrace it. If they refused this, he determined to proceed to severer measures.

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* Opuscules. Oeuvres Complètes (Blaise, 1821), p. 86.

Such decisions as these seem strange to some modern minds. Toleration in religion is one of the great cries of the day, even amongst those who, like certain Prohibitionists and Eugenists, will allow no toleration in the matter of bodily health. But in justice to the protagonists of this work, we may be allowed to remark that exactly the same policy was employed by the Calvinists. These, to mention only one case, had approved of the rigours exercised by Calvin against Michael Servetus; and in 1554 Beza had published a book in support of the thesis that the civil magistrates have the right, nay, the obligation, to punish heretics.

On Wednesday, October 6, then, the Duke summoned to the Town Hall all the burghers of Thonon and the notabilities of Chablais. There, attended by the Bishops of Geneva and St Paul, the Provost and Father Chérubin, he spoke to the following effect: " Since the time when, by just and lawful warfare, we gained back this province that had been unjustly occupied by the heretics, we have had no greater desire than to see it delivered from the tyranny of hell, which it endured beneath the sway of heresy. That is why we sent to you from the very beginning doctors of theology and preachers of the true religion—amongst whom the chief was the Provost here present to-day—in order to bring light to your darkness and to draw you back from the jaws of hell. For although we might well have constrained you to embrace the religion of your prince, had we so willed, yet we preferred to deal with you gently, hoping that you would at once recognize your Mother and return to her arms. True it is that we have reason to rejoice along with the Holy Catholic Church over some of you: we see you, we love you, and we shall not forget you when the time comes to show you our affection. But there are others, harder than rocks and more obstinate than Pharaoh, whom nothing can move, neither the sanctity, majesty, splendour, excellence, antiquity, strength, miracles, nor unity of the Catholic religion—to say naught of our example and will—so enamoured are they of the defilement of error and so deeply do they love darkness, like the birds of night, rather than the light. It is impossible for us not to hate them, and in truth, if they do not seek conversion, they shall learn what it is to incur our displeasure."*

After this speech the Prince turned to his councillors and asked them for the expression of their opinion upon the matter in hand. A certain number of them were still of advice that it would be imprudent to irritate the Bernese by insisting on the total conversion of the province: but the President of the Chamber of Finance, M. Berliet, rising to address the council, spoke as follows: "The lot is already cast: the Rubicon is crossed. We ought to finish the work begun. Except for a small number who remain attached to heresy rather from pride and obstinacy than from conviction, the whole country is converted or is on the verge of conversion. It is not right that the obstinacy of a few, and a pusillanimous fear, should weigh against the desires of the whole province and compromise the salvation of all." The Duke was delighted with these words and immediately cried out: "Yes, rather than defraud the Church of the conquests which she has just made, I prefer to lose the bailiwick of Nyon, which, according to report, the Bernese are thinking of offering to me. Nay, I would rather lose all my estates, and even life itself!"†

The whole Council, the bishops, the Provost and Father Chérubin applauded these energetic words, and the Duke, turning to the burghers, addressed them in tones of command: "It is time for you to tell me your final resolution. Let those who carry the white cross of Savoy in their hearts and who, therefore, are of our religion or desire to embrace it, stand at my right hand: and let those who wear the gloomy colours of heresy and prefer the schism of Calvin to the Church of Jesus Christ pass to my left."‡

The greater number of those to whom these words were addressed immediately passed to the right: some thirty or forty, however, went to the left. Francis, having watched the division with anxiety, quickly made his way towards the latter group, and spoke to them with his accustomed gentleness. He represented to them that all that was demanded of them in the first instance was to allow themselves to be instructed in the arguments for the Catholic Church, that such an instruction would certainly reveal to them the truth, and that, if they persisted in their imprudent obstinacy, it could only bring upon them the most disastrous consequences. The Provost's persuasive eloquence produced a further division of forces and the greater number passed to the right. There only remained on the side of the inflexibles some seven or eight noblemen and burghers, the most notable of whom were Joly, the advocate Desprez, and Colonel de Brotty. Upon this little remnant the Duke's anger fell incontinent. "You, then," he said, "are the only ones who choose to resist me, and to remain enemies of your God and your prince! It only remains for me to show you that I am your sovereign and your master." On this one of the assembly courageously ventured to excuse the inculpated gentlemen, but the Duke was inflexible and refused to hear him. He then commanded a secretary to take down the names of the recalcitrant Calvinists, intimated to the latter that he gave them a short time of grace in which to leave the province, and ordered them to leave his presence. They were immediately led from the building by the ushers and the Prince's guards, and from thence made their way to Nyon on the other side of the lake of Geneva.*

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* C. A. de S., l. iii, pp. 217, 218.

† Hamon quotes Berliet himself in Report to Sixtus V, November 12, 1603.

‡ *Relation Abrégée*, chap. xxvii. Pérennès (l. iv, chap. ii) quotes *Missions des Capucins*, l. iii, p. 55, De Cambis, Tom. I, p. 301. See also C. A. de S. (l. iii, p. 218), whose version is slightly different.

In the meanwhile, in other parts of Chablais the work of conversion had been going on apace. On October 3 had come the inhabitants of Machilly and eight hundred people from the marquisate of Lullin; on the 4th, those of Bons and of Didier; on Wednesday, October 7, the day after the convocation we have just described, there arrived the parishes of Ballaison, Douvaine, Filly, Messery, Hermance, and several others, converted by the untiring zeal of Father Sebastian, the Capuchin, who, in order to catechize the peasants, had worked with them amongst their vineyards. On Thursday came the parishes of Cusy, Encenevex, and Fessy; on Friday three hundred people from the bailiwick of Ternier, a distance varying from seven to ten leagues. On Saturday there arrived Saxel, Brens, Veigy, Corsier, Chavanex, Seiez, and the people of Margencel, carrying at their head the cross which they had possessed before the Calvinist conquest, and which they had managed to preserve from the destructive inquests of their oppressors. The last to arrive were the people of the suburbs of Thonon—Tully, Rive, and Vongy. Thus in two or three weeks two thousand men, accompanied by their wives and families, had come to demand admission into the pale of the Catholic Church. Before long others were to be seen imitating their example.

When the Senate of Berne heard of the decree of banishment issued against those who refused to receive instruction in the Catholic doctrine, it gave orders that letters should be written to the Duke of Savoy, addressing him in a threatening tone and protesting that he was thereby infringing the articles of the treaty of Nyon. The Genevans, on their part, made representation to Queen Elizabeth of

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* C. A. de S., l. iii, p. 218. Pérennès quotes De Cambis, Tom. I, p. 302.

England, to the Protestants of France and the Low Countries, and to the Lutheran princes of Germany, who all demanded of the Duke with instance that liberty of conscience should be granted in favour of the Calvinists of Chablais.* Such a protest from Queen Elizabeth must have borne a strange spice of mockery, for by this date at least 150 Catholic priests and laymen had been imprisoned, tortured, and executed for their religion under her solicitous regard for liberty of conscience, and hundreds of others had suffered other minor but grievous forms of persecution.

The Duke, at any rate, was not influenced by fear of any such protestations, for on October 12 he signed further letters patent by which he notified (1) that no person owning ecclesiastical goods and revenues in the bailiwicks of Chablais and Ternier could bestow them, directly or indirectly, by farming out or leasing, upon any but Catholics, under penalty of confiscation; (2) that it was forbidden to all persons, whatsoever might be their quality or position, under penalty of a thousand pounds fine or under any other penalty at the discretion of the judge, to threaten, insult, maltreat or intimidate Catholics or others who were desirous of entering the Roman Church; (3) that all those belonging to the so-called Reformed religion were ineligible for any office, post, or dignity, and that all contracts and other acts issued by them as public officers should be null and void in law.

About this time the Duke received from the King of France a letter which caused him considerable vexation and threatened to embarrass his efforts for the catholicizing of his recovered provinces. In this letter the French king declared that it was his intention to include Geneva in the treaty of Vervins, and that consequently under no pretext whatsoever was the Duke to declare war against that city. Geneva, it was true, was not mentioned explicitly in that treaty, but Henry IV based his declaration on the words "and other allies," which came after the names expressly mentioned.† This was a bitter blow to the Duke, one of whose cherished ambitions was the recovery of a city which had once belonged to his forebears and to which he still laid claim as part of his heritage. Moreover, it strengthened the Genevans in their refusal to restore the property which they had usurped from the Bishop and Chapter of Geneva, as well as the bailiwicks of Gex and Gaillard and the twelve parishes of Ternier. It was also an encouragement to them in the maintenance of the laws then existing in their city against the Catholic religion—laws which might have been greatly mitigated under the threat of war with the now powerful state of Savoy.

* Pérennès (l. iv, chap. ii), quoting *Vie de Cl. de Granier*, p. 195. See also *Relation Abrégée.*

† See Note, p. 365, Tom. XI of E.N.

Under these circumstances the Bishop of Geneva considered it advisable that the Provost should be sent to Rome, to explain to the Pope the grave consequences of this attitude on the part of the French Government, and to beg His Holiness to write to Henry IV, representing to the latter that Geneva was not included in the treaty, and that if the King absolutely insisted upon such an inclusion, justice and religion demanded that it should be qualified by two conditions. These conditions were that the Genevans should allow the free exercise of the Catholic religion in their city, and that they should restore the ecclesiastical property which they or their ancestors had unjustly taken from the Bishop and Chapter of Geneva. In view of what had recently occurred in Chablais, it cannot be denied that the first of these demands was inconsistent.

The Bishop also proposed that the Provost should lay before the Pope another matter not less essential to the welfare of religion. In spite of the Duke's decrees and the entreaties of the Bishop, the military order of SS. Maurice and Lazarus had failed to restore the benefices of Chablais, which Gregory XIII had only ceded to them until the time when the Catholic religion should be re-established in the country. Now the revenues of these benefices were absolutely necessary for the upkeep of the missionaries, curés, and parishes. A pontifical bull, transferring these properties from the Knights to the Bishop, could alone restore them to their original and rightful purpose. No one could deal with this matter more effectively than the Provost, who was so thoroughly cognizant of the state of affairs, and who was so intensely and intimately concerned in the spiritual welfare of Chablais.

About this time the Duke made arrangements by which the Provost was to be repaid for all the expenses which he had incurred during the last four years in his work of converting the province of Chablais. The Primicerius of Angeville, who had been appointed administrator of the benefices of Chablais and of Ternier, sent to Francis by order of the Bishop an order on the Procurator Fiscal. Francis, however, refused to accept any of this money for himself, but gave directions that it should be diverted to the upkeep of the parish priests and the reparation of the churches. Such unselfishness gave the greatest edification to the Duke and to all his court, and strengthened the Prince still further in the high appreciation he had already formed of the Saint's virtue. "Provost de Sales," he would often say, "is the father and apostle of the people of Chablais: and if God were to grant the Church a certain number of soldiers as brave, zealous, and devoted as he is, there would be a change on the face of the earth. But we do not deserve such a favour."

Francis, however, was unwilling to leave to others the task of distributing to the poor the alms allotted by the Duke's order of September 24 from the religious houses of Ripaille and Filly. From these two houses the Duke had the right to receive an annual sum for distribution as alms wherever he should think fit. Francis, to whom was allotted this task, wished to accomplish it himself. He first of all distributed each day nine four-pound loaves to the poor of the district, with an alms for every needy stranger who passed that way: then each week thirty loaves to the villages situated on the other side of the Drance, and twenty to the poor of Thonon and its neighbourhood—in all, close upon five hundred pounds each week. Moreover, as several people, rendered helpless by sickness and old age, were unable to apply personally for their share of the public alms, he obtained from the two monasteries five large bushels of corn, which he distributed himself to sixteen amongst the most needy. Such a work as this was very dear to his heart, and the manner in which he accomplished it increased the value of the gift a hundredfold. He went amongst the poor as their father, gentle of speech and manner, full of sympathy for them in their trials, and quick to console the hearts of those who were afflicted either by physical suffering or sorrow of soul. At the same time he took advantage of the opportunity to work amongst them for their spiritual good. He would question them about their religion, give them little instructions, and exhort them to lead good lives: then he would kneel down amongst them and recite with them the Creed, the Commandments of God, prayers for the exaltation of the faith and for the preservation of their benefactor, the Duke of Savoy, with all his people.

This charitable duty accomplished, Francis went for a few days' rest to the château of Sales. It is needless to say what a joy this was for his family. Great as had always been their love and admiration for him, it could not but have been increased by the wonderful success of his apparently impossible task, by the praises they heard on every side, and by the miraculous signs of favour with which God had chosen to mark him. Yet, in spite of all that had happened, they found in him the same wonderful humility and simplicity as of yore: there never was the slightest sign in him that he himself realized he had done anything worthy of remark. But the feeling which was uppermost in their hearts during these short days of intimate home life was a deep veneration for his sanctity, matured and made perfect by all that he had endured during the last few years. Without any external display or devout mannerisms his very presence and every action revealed the spirit of God dwelling within him, filling them with respect and admiration, yet drawing them towards him with the strong attraction of the noblest kind of love.

These happy days were not to last for long. His mission to Rome was calling to him imperatively, and at the end of October or the first days of November he set out on his journey for the eternal city.

Whilst Francis was pursuing his way to Rome, the Duke took upon himself the work of the apostolate. He used to invite the Protestants to his palace, would receive them with every kindness, and use every argument to persuade them to abandon the Calvinist religion. He would then engage them to confer with the missionaries, recommending them especially to Father Chérubin, in the absence of the Provost. In these interviews with the learned and indefatigable Franciscan, the work of conversion, initiated by the Prince, was nearly always carried through to a successful conclusion, and then Charles Emmanuel would lead his converts in triumph to the church of St Hippolytus, that they might make their abjuration in the presence of the Bishop of Geneva.

From Thonon he passed to the different districts of Chablais, and on his arrival at each parish, assembling the principal inhabitants of the place, he would pursue the same policy. This he did with so much persuasiveness and kindness as almost invariably to touch the hearts of his hearers, and often these meetings would end by the people crying out: "We want to be of the same religion as our good prince. We renounce all heresy." Before long the enthusiasm engendered by this policy had become general throughout Chablais. The people would gather in crowds upon the Prince's route, making the air resound with cries of "Long live His Highness! Long live the Roman Church! Long live the Pope!" The whole province soon presented once again the aspect of a Catholic country, and the figure of the cross reappeared in all the public ways.* In the case of these conversions under the influence of royal persuasion and command there is always a certain amount of insincerity and time-serving: but the zealous perseverance which followed the present movement, and the permanent results achieved, lead one to consider that in the majority of cases the change was genuine and in accordance with the wishes of the people, once they were ensured against the fear of oppression from the direction of Geneva. The Provost's example and teaching, the frequent discomfitures of the Protestant ministers, the striking conversion of prominent men such as Henry IV in France and the Baron d'Avully in Chablais, the attractiveness of the Catholic doctrine, and even the severity and gloom of Calvinism itself, must all have tended towards the one end. There remained, however, a few Calvinists whom no threats or persuasion could move. With regard to these the Duke carried out his promise that a strong hand should be used against the recalcitrant, and they were eventually banished from the province under conditions which will be seen later. Having thus re-established Catholicism in Chablais, the next task was to organize and protect the new state of affairs, so as to make it effective and permanent. The first means which the

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* Pérennès (l. iv, chap. ii, p. 367) quotes *Missions des Capucins*, l. iii, p. 57, and De Baudry's *Relation Abrégée*, p. 245 *et seq.*

Duke employed with this object was to ensure funds for the upkeep of the parish priests and missionaries of the province. From the enquiries made by D'Angeville and Marin it was found that in the bailiwick of Ternier only some nineteen parishes had as yet been restored to the domain of the Duke of Savoy; that all the rest were in the holding of the Genevans and consequently still under the power of Calvinism; and that in Chablais, in spite of the ravages of the religious wars, there still remained a certain amount of property and a few churches at the disposal of the Catholics. The Duke, after having made a study of the situation, made an arrangement with the Bishop to establish parish priests and preachers throughout the country, and appointed an Administrator-General of ecclesiastical property in Chablais and in the bailiwick of Ternier, in order that all the funds might be employed to the greatest possible advantage. It was his intention in the beginning to appoint the Provost to this office: but when his attention was called to the fact that it would be a great loss for religion if a man, capable of such great things, were to be wasted in the routine work of administrative business, he changed his mind and appointed instead the Primicerius D'Angeville.

He gave an anticipatory sanction to a project, submitted to him by Father Chérubin, as well as by Francis and others, for the foundation of a kind of university at Thonon; he authorized the establishment of two printing-presses, and bestowed a grant to the printer of 300 crowns for the acquisition of the necessary material; finally, on November 12, he approved of the following memorandum which had been placed in his hands by Francis de Sales.

"1. That it shall please Your Highness to command that the inhabitants of Chablais and Ternier shall live according to the Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman Church, granting to those who hold any other form of religion sufficient time either to obtain instruction or to leave the state, with permission to sell their property to Catholics during the said time: and that if this has not been done within the prescribed time, the said property shall be considered as confiscated, and the persons proceeded against according to the due form of law.

"2. That it shall not be allowed to any person whatsoever, under penalties fixed by Your Highness, to dogmatize or dispute about the faith, except before Catholic theologians or other ecclesiastical persons, and then for the sake of instruction only; as also to obstruct or hinder people in any way whatsoever from attending the divine offices and other Catholic exercises.

"3. That all those who inhabit the said states shall observe the feasts, fasts, vigils, Lent, and other commandments of the Church, and shall assist at processions, under such penalties as Your Highness shall decree.

"4. That the reading of heretical, censured, and prohibited books be forbidden to everybody; that command be issued to those who have such books to deliver them to the Bishop within the space of one month, and that when the month be expired, officials shall be appointed to make special search in the houses, and to take proceedings with a view to ecclesiastical censures and other legal penalties, being aided therein by the power of the local officers.

" 5. That on the feast days all shall assist at the divine offices of the Church, High Mass, vespers, sermon, processions: and that they shall be obliged to do this by the local officers, under such penalties as shall please Your Highness.

" 6. That on feast days it shall be forbidden to every one to walk abroad in public, to frequent taverns, to indulge in dances, or to open shops during High Mass, vespers, processions, and sermons, under penalty according to Your Highness's decree.

" 7. That fathers and mothers of families shall send their children, menservants, maids, and other domestics to church on the days appointed for catechism: and that for this object there shall be appointed in each town or village street, throughout the parish, an inspector, with the duty of keeping a register and of reporting those absent to the priests, in order that proceedings may be taken against the disobedient under penalties as above.

" 8. That the edict which deprives of all public offices those who remain obstinate in heresy, shall be executed in due form, with a declaration that they cannot exercise the said offices through the intermediary of other persons, and that these other persons may not act as such intermediaries, under penalties.

" 9. That it shall please Your Highness to appoint commissioners, to proceed against those who have destroyed churches and presbyteries, or have sold, bought, or carried away tiles, wood, altar stones, fonts, holy-water stoups, in order that, in addition to the legal penalties decreed against such offences, they shall be obliged to rebuild the churches and presbyteries at their expense and supply them with the necessary furniture.

" 10. That those who are in possession of church property shall be forced to restore it.

" 11. That those who possess titles, papers, account books, extracts, and other documents connected with the revenues of the church, shall within the space of a month place them in the hands of a commissioner appointed by Your Highness, in order that these may be afterwards delivered to those people to whom they shall belong.

" 12. That it shall please Your Highness to remedy the abuse, committed with regard to the alms of corn, reserved by the terms of the farm leases for the poor villagers, so that this corn may be allotted to its proper destination; that commissioners be appointed to examine the accounts of the farm tenants with regard to these alms;

and that the Senate be commanded to force delinquents in this matter to make such restitution, and to give such accounts as shall be ordered by the Bishop of the diocese.

"13. That the bells which are now at Allinges shall be restored to the churches to which they belong; that the metal of the bells of Thonon, Filly, and other places, which is now stored at Allinges, shall be delivered to the Bishop or his deputies, in order to be made up into bells for the churches of Thonon, according as he shall see to be most expedient; and that this be done in the space of a fortnight.

"14. That it shall please Your Highness to take under his special safeguard and protection the Bishop, the canons, the curés, preachers, priests, and other ecclesiastics, together with the members of their households and their servants, in order to hinder the commission of any wrong against their persons or property, and that for this end he shall give them into the charge and keeping of the governors of Chablais and Ternier, and of the magistrates and syndics of the towns and parishes, so that these shall answer in their own name for any wrong inflicted upon such ecclesiastics.

"15. That, finally, the afore-mentioned governors and magistrates shall devote themselves to the full observation of these articles, and that in whatever concerns the jurisdiction of the Church they shall give their help to the officers of that jurisdiction by every due and reasonable channel of justice, according to the forms of law and the edicts and intentions of Your Highness."*

The Duke of Savoy, having considered these articles at length, modified them slightly in some respects, but sanctioned them all in general. Consequently, he prohibited the exercise of the Protestant religion in his states: forbade his subjects to cross the frontier for the purpose of attending the preaching of the ministers, to absent themselves from the country for more than a week, to dispose of their property directly or indirectly in a manner likely to be advantageous to the cause of heresy, or to celebrate marriages or to have their children baptized and instructed except in the Catholic Church; he promised to stop by severe penalties the keeping or selling of prohibited books; he also ordained that Calvinists should attend Catholic sermons, that children should assist at the catechism, that the heads of families should be responsible for the attendance of their children and servants, either at catechisms or sermons according to circumstances. He instructed the officers of his states to punish in exemplary fashion anyone who should in any way dissuade or prevent others from assisting at the exercises of the Catholic religion, and to see carefully to the execution of these decrees. Finally, in agreement with a former suggestion of the Provost's, he ordered that councils should be formed to take the place of the Calvinist consistories, as watch committees over morals, for the repression of such disorders as did not fall immediately under the law of the land; he directed that these councils should consist of a certain number of ecclesiastics, of a member of the municipality or parish council, and of the governor or judge or procurator fiscal; and he gave these councils power to make by-laws, to appoint inspectors, to adjudicate without great formalities the things that fell within their province, and to inflict slight sentences of prison, small fines, and other salutary punishments.

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* Opuscules. Oeuvres Complètes (Blaise, 1821), p. 108.

On October 19 the Duke signed two other decrees destined to free the people of Chablais from the necessity of frequenting Geneva and Lausanne for the purpose of business finance and borrowing money, and in order to supply them in their own country with opportunity for study and for instruction in the practical arts. For the first purpose he imposed a tax upon all wine sold in Chablais, and with the money thus obtained he founded a *Mont-de-piété* or bank, whence people could borrow money at a low interest and without security. For the second purpose he decided upon the foundation of a correctional house, for the institution of which he handed over a building confiscated under the law: this place was to serve as a sort of industrial school, to which idle young people and mendicants should be sent, in order that they might learn a trade, be protected from vice, and become useful members of society.

These things ended for the time being the Duke's personal work in Chablais. It is very difficult to form a just estimation of the character and history of Charles Emmanuel in general, so full do they seem of irreconcilable inconsistencies. It is interesting, at any rate, to know what Francis de Sales thought of him in regard to this work in Chablais. This is found in the preface to the Saint's treatise on the Love of God. After mentioning the glory which the Duke had gained by personal valour and a skill in warfare that was renowned throughout Europe, Francis continues: "As to myself, I cannot sufficiently exalt the re-establishment of our holy religion in the three bailiwicks which I have just mentioned, having myself seen in him so many traits of piety, matched by so many varied examples of prudence, constancy, high-mindedness, justice, and gentleness that in this little framework alone I seemed to perceive, as in a reduced picture, all that is praiseworthy in those princes who have in former times most ardently done service to the glory of God and of his Church . . . and so I esteem more what this great Prince then did in this little corner of his states than many of those actions of greater renown which are extolled by not a few to the very skies."

CHAPTER XII*

NOVEMBER, 1598—JUNE, 1599

Claude de Granier's petition to the Pope—Francis journeys towards Rome—Attempt upon his virtue—Arrival at Rome—Interviews with Clement VIII—Petitions—Examination for the episcopate—Friendships in Rome—Francis goes to Loretto—Then to Bologna—Arrives at Turin—Troubles with the Order of SS. Maurice and Lazarus—Settlement—Francis reaches Annecy—Cures a sick woman

AS Francis was about to set out on his journey to Rome, the Bishop gave him a letter for the Holy Father, begging Clement VIII to use his influence with Henry IV in regard to the recent inclusion of the city of Geneva as beneficiary by the treaty of Vervins. The Bishop described how this attitude on the part of the French King "inspires all the heretics with incredible audacity, and hinders their admission to the Catholic faith," how "if it does not altogether cast down the courage of the new converts, it, at least, causes them great anxiety," and how, finally, it deprived the Bishop and the canons "of all hopes of recovering the ecclesiastical property which the Genevans retain with the greatest iniquity."† To this letter the Bishop joined a petition drawn up in nine articles, and added that, although he had wished to send at this time the account of his diocese which he owed to His Holiness, yet a certain number of necessary memoranda had not yet reached him, and rather than delay any further the Provost's departure, he was despatching the latter at once. He engaged to send on the other documents as soon as was possible. Along with Francis, the Bishop sent the Abbé de Chissé, his nephew and vicar general, with the special mission to ask the Holy Father that the Provost might be associated with his Ordinary as coadjutor of the diocese with right of succession. In this respect the Bishop explained that, owing to his own great infirmities, he was no longer able to govern properly a vast diocese of some six hundred parishes, the more so that to his ordinary labours was now added by the conversion of Chablais the extra work of consecrating and blessing the altars, churches, and cemeteries of sixty-four new parishes. In consideration of the nobility, learning, piety, and sanctity of Francis de Sales, the Bishop begged that his provost might be granted to him as coadjutor. With regard to the furnishing of the necessary revenue, Mgr. de Granier suggested that the new Bishop should be allowed to keep his canonry and the benefice of Petit Bornand, to which would be added a fourth part of all the fruits and revenues accruing to the Ordinary, thus making in all an annual income of four hundred and eighty ducats (about £135). "By granting this favour," adds the Bishop, "Your Holiness will give a particular proof of his benevolence and will accomplish a thing pleasing both to God and man; for Francis de Sales is keenly desired not only by his Bishop, but also by His Most Serene Highness the Duke of Savoy and by all the people who owe their conversion to his continual preaching, carried on for four years, at the peril of his life, in a country inhabited by the Calvinist heretics. These people have seen, and still see from day to day, the convincing testimony of all his actions."*

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* Hamon, l. iii, chap. i.

† E.N., Tom. XI, p. 365.

Supplied with these letters, the two travellers set out on their journey, and, crossing the Alps without any untoward incident, arrived at Turin, where they had an interview with the Nuncio about the business which was calling them to Rome. Then they continued their way to Modena, where they hoped to find President Favre and young Louis de Sales, who had set out ahead of them for the same destination. President Favre had been sent into Italy by the Duke of Nemours on business about some litigation which was to be adjudicated in Rome. He was taking with him two of his sons, who were to finish their studies at Rome, and Louis de Sales, who was to follow a course of law in that city. After several days of uneventful travel, Francis had the misfortune to be thrown from his horse, which fell beneath him on a particularly bad piece of the road: the Provost escaped without any serious damage beyond being wet through and covered with mud. Happily he was accompanied by a French gentleman, who, as soon as they arrived at the first inn, insisted on lending Francis a suit of black velvet to wear, whilst his own clothes were drying. During his stay at this inn he was the victim of still another unpleasant adventure. As he sat by the fire alone in one of the rooms, there came into the apartment one of those unfortunate women whose passionate nature is so often the cause of misconduct on the part of others. This woman, not knowing the quality and character of the man she had to deal with, at once proceeded to make the most outrageous overtures. The Saint, astounded at such advances, immediately repulsed her, gently at first, and finally with the utmost severity. Finding, however, that she was beyond all sense of reproach, he left the room in search of his servant Rolland, to whom he recounted what had happened, giving him orders that in future he was to remain in constant attendance and not to leave his master alone.†

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* *Vide* Opuscules. Oeuvres Complètes (Blaise, 1821), p. 138.

† C. A. de S., l. iv, p. 253.

On arriving at Modena, he found that President Favre and his companions had already set out for Rome, and consequently he resumed his journey without stopping there any longer than was necessary. When he reached his final destination, he was not long in discovering the whereabouts of his friend, took lodgings on December 17 at the same hotel near the church of St Saviour in Lauro, and at once made his way, in company with the President, to the basilica of St Peter, there to venerate the tomb of the Apostles. Here he prayed earnestly that he might be made participator in the full Apostolic spirit, and recommended to the protection of the Founders of the Church his diocese of Geneva and especially his own beloved people of Chablais.

It was about the middle of January, 1599, that Francis and the Abbé de Chissé were presented to the Pope by Cardinal de Medicis, who, in introducing the Provost, described him to Clement VIII as the Apostle of Chablais, adding that that was the name which the Duke of Savoy delighted to give him. The Holy Father received them with the greatest kindness, and listened with pleasure to the Provost's description of the progress which Catholicism had made in Chablais. Francis then handed to the Pope the letter of the Bishop of Geneva, begging the Holy See to intervene with Henry IV with regard to the French King's intention to include Geneva in the treaty of Vervins: he seconded the letter by such representations of his own as he thought would be to the point in persuading the Holy Father. He then presented the Bishop's second petition, a document which was drawn up in nine articles. In the first, Mgr. de Granier asked that the benefices of Chablais might be taken from the charge of the Knights of SS Maurice and Lazarus, basing this request on the necessity of the new situation, on the expressed condition with which Gregory XIII had entrusted these benefices to the Knights, and on the consent of the Duke of Savoy, himself the Grand Master of the Order. In the second article the Bishop asked permission to impose a small tax upon the monasteries, priories, and simple benefices of his diocese, in order to provide for the support of a certain number of canons theologian, who were more necessary in a country surrounded by heretics than anywhere else. In the third article the Bishop petitioned that, inasmuch as the greater part of the parish priests of Chablais were undergoing the direst poverty, their ordinary might be authorized to take on their behalf a suitable proportion of the tithes and offerings received by abbots, priors, and other ecclesiastics, and this in spite of opposition or appeal. In the next four articles the Bishop requested the power of dispensing from consanguinity and affinity to the fourth degree; the faculty for himself, his vicar general, and twelve ecclesiastics of his choice, to absolve from heresy and to read heretical works for controversial purposes;

exemption for himself from the tenths conceded to the Duke of Savoy, on account of the diminution of the episcopal revenues; and authorization for the canons of the Cathedral, because of their utter want of means, to undertake the cure of souls in addition to their canonries, on condition that, where necessary, they should employ curates for the service of the faithful. The eighth article was peculiar. Apparently a number of the Bishop's subjects were under certain obligations which he rightly considered were by no means in harmony with the spirit of Christianity. Certain of these subjects, for instance, were obliged to watch at night for the purpose of stopping the croaking of frogs, lest the episcopal slumbers should suffer; they were forbidden to dress in black cloth or to wear a coloured border on their clothes; and they were also prohibited from disposing of their goods by will, so that if they had no children, their property passed automatically to the bishop. How such tyrannical and ridiculous enactments ever came into force at all must remain a mystery to the most astute of historians. Mgr. de Granier asked that these obligations might be abolished in favour of a slight tax, the amount of which might be settled amicably between himself and the interested parties. The ninth article related to the reform of several monasteries which had fallen away from their ancient discipline, and His Holiness was asked to appoint a number of prelates, who should conduct enquiries as to the state of these communities, should correct abuses, and should bring the religious back to their primitive observance.

The Provost then presented further petitions on behalf of the Chapter of Geneva, banished by the Calvinists from that city and now residing at Annecy. He asked permission to add to the Chapter's income the revenues of the Convent of the Hermits of St Augustine at Thonon, which was uninhabitable, half-ruined, and beyond the possibility of repair on the part of that Order. This benefice was amongst those held at the time by the Knights of SS Maurice and Lazarus. If this permission were granted, it was proposed that the canons should leave Annecy and should station themselves at Thonon, where they could make themselves more useful in the cause of religion by preaching, hearing confessions, and performing other functions of their ministry. He requested that the chaplains and other beneficiaries of the Church of Geneva, especially the twelve priests of the chapel of the Machabees, should be commanded to accompany the canons to their proposed residence, under pain of being banished from the Chapter and deprived of their benefices. In the case of a refusal on the part of these priests, the Provost petitioned that their revenues might be joined to the Chapter funds, in order that they might be applied to the restoration of the church and the upkeep of other chapels, which would be erected there.*

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* Opuscules (Blaise, 1821), p. 117.

The Pope received these petitions with kindness, promised to give them his consideration, to discuss them with his council, and to grant all that he could.

We learn the results of this interview from a letter written by the Provost to Mgr. de Granier in the middle of January, 1599. "We placed ten articles before His Holiness on your behalf, and he has approved of some of these. Some he has referred to the Nuncio, and the others he has almost refused."

Francis then goes on to relate that the Pope granted the taking away from the Knights of the benefices of Chablais and the other bailiwicks, as far as was necessary for the re-establishment of religion; the fixing for the nonce by the Bishop of the parish priests' incomes; permission to absolve heretics as demanded; the visitation of the monasteries; and leave to the canons to undertake parish work, though this last point was not completely settled. He referred to the Nuncio the matter of the tenths to the Duke of Savoy and the freeing of the Bishop's subjects from the burdens mentioned in the eighth article. As to the funds for the canons theologian, the Pope was unwilling to tax the monasteries for these, not wishing, as he said, to strip one altar for the furnishing of another.

"As to the moving of our cathedral," continues the Provost, "it is still in suspense, because our Cardinal Commissary did not know whether Thonon was nearer to Geneva than Annecy. Nevertheless, neither His Holiness nor the Cardinals are too much in favour of this proposal, deeming that the people of Annecy desire our staying in their town, and hold us in just the same esteem in which all towns do such items as the persons of the Bishop and his Chapter. They consider that the benefits of this change can be supplied in another manner. But, in a word, I think that whatever is not granted will be referred to the Nuncio.

"Never have I been in any place where deliberation was so great as it is in this court. His Holiness would not grant a favour, however small, without its being weighed and checked by the Council of the Cardinals, who, seeing 'the Holy Father to be of this or that opinion,' are also themselves of the same. For the rest there shines almost everywhere an almost angelic courtesy and bearing, especially in our three commissaries, Cardinals Borghese, Arigoni, and Bianchetti, and above all in Cardinal Baronius, who has aided us with all his favour with regard to both His Holiness and the Cardinals."

As to the affair of Geneva, no representations apparently could be made until a Nuncio for France was appointed and sent to Paris. The Nuncio had, indeed, been nominated, but it seemed likely that considerable time would elapse before he reached his destination.*

During the next few days Francis visited several of the sanctuaries for which Rome is famous, accompanied always by President Favre, and the two of them would spend long hours in prayer before the relics of the saints. The Abbé de Chissé relates that on March 13 he came upon the Saint in the catacombs, weeping and sighing on his knees before the tombs of the martyrs, and so absorbed in his prayer that he had lost all consciousness of what was passing around him. The Vicar-General, surprised and somewhat alarmed at seeing him in this state, drew near, and asked him if he had received any bad news from Annecy, such, for instance, as the death of the Bishop. "No," answered Francis, "but you cannot find it strange that in the midst of those who had the happiness to shed their blood for the faith, I should at least shed a few tears at my own unworthiness. O happy martyrs, how enviable is their lot! Sinner that I am, I do not deserve to have a share in the graces of the saints and favourites of God. It only remains for me to humble myself and weep."*

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* E.N., Tom. XII, Lettre CXXI, p. 1.

Shortly afterwards, having received from the Bishop of Geneva the expected account of the state of his diocese, he obtained a second interview with the Pope, in which he handed this account to the latter, along with a letter from Mgr. de Granier, appointing the Provost as his representative for the visit *ad limina*. In this interview the Holy Father treated him no less graciously than on the former occasion.

At the time when the Abbé de Chissé had accompanied Francis in their audience with the Holy Father, the former had refrained, out of respect for his companion's modesty, from presenting the petition by which his uncle, the Bishop of Geneva, asked that the Provost might be appointed as coadjutor with right of succession. Having, however, obtained a special audience on March 19, he presented this request to His Holiness, recommending it with the greatest earnestness and bestowing the most unstinted praise on the object of his uncle's choice. The Sovereign Pontiff was aware that this very dignity might well enough have been bestowed upon the Vicar-General himself, who was in every way worthy of it, and he was singularly edified by the generosity and humility which led this distinguished ecclesiastic thus to advocate the cause of another at the cost of personal ambition. He was in equal admiration also of the Bishop of Geneva, who thus passed over his own nephew, worthy, indeed, in every way for the position, in order to secure for his diocese the very best that was obtainable. The Pope knew well enough that such was not always the attitude of prelates in high position or of the members of their family. Consequently he received the petitioner with the very greatest favour, and granted willingly a request that was made with such evident disinterestedness and forgetfulness of self. The next day, then, he summoned Francis into his presence and told the latter how agreeable to himself was the choice which Mgr. de Granier had made in his petition for a coadjutor. "We rejoice, my son, and give thanks to the Divine Goodness, that you have been thus called to the episcopate. Hold yourself ready to undergo an examination in our presence on Monday, March 22."*

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* *Année de S. F. de S.*, Mars 13.

When Francis had left the Holy Father's presence, the thought of the last words which the Pope had uttered caused him considerable embarrassment. He was not afraid of the idea of an examination in itself, but he knew that the bishops of his country had been exempt from time immemorial from such an ordeal, and he was afraid lest submission on his part in the present instance might be a blow to the rights and prerogatives of his nation. In this dilemma he bethought himself of going to the ambassador of Savoy and placing the matter in that nobleman's hands. The latter, startled at this unexpected proposal on the part of the Holy Father, at once sought audience of him, and represented that those elected for the episcopacy in the country of Savoy had always been exempt from the preliminary examination. Clement VIII replied that in this particular instance there was no thought of creating a precedent against such a well-known privilege, that the other subjects who might be nominated to bishoprics in Savoy would continue to be exempt from the examination, but that, having heard much of the Provost's learning and capability, he desired for his own pleasure to have the opportunity of enjoying these at first hand and to display in the presence of the cardinals the eminent merit of the bishop-elect. The ambassador, satisfied with this reply, told Francis to prepare himself. For such preparation there was little or no time. To study was no longer possible: long meditations at the foot of the crucifix, nights passed almost entirely in prayer, the offering of the sacrifice of the Mass—these were the only means he employed in making himself ready for such an ordeal. As he was making his way to the place of examination on the day fixed, he entered the church of St James *in Burgo*. Casting himself upon his knees, he offered up to God the following prayer: "O Lord, if by thy eternal Providence thou knowest that I should only be a useless servant in the episcopal office, and that I have not the necessary zeal for the souls which would be committed to me, permit not that I answer well the questions that are to be put to me, but grant rather that I be covered with confusion before thy Vicar and that I gain nothing from this examination but ignominy."†

Filled with these sentiments, Francis made his way to the reception room of the Pontifical Palace. Here he found an immense gathering assembled for the occasion. The Holy Father was supported by eight cardinals, amongst whom were Cardinals Frederick Borromeo, Baronius, Borghese, and de Medici; there were also present a score

* Ç. A. de S., l. iv, p. 264.

† *Ibid.*, p. 264.

of archbishops, bishops, and generals of religious orders, whilst a number of protonotaries, canons, and religious assisted as examiners. Amongst these was the famous Bellarmine. A large crowd of less distinguished visitors filled the apartment to overflowing. That to place oneself, as it were, on trial before such an assembly was a formidable matter was proved only too evidently by a tragic incident which occurred at the very beginning of the session. A learned and distinguished Spanish ecclesiastic, nominated to a bishopric, was to undergo the examination along with Francis. The moment he entered the room, however, he was seized with such an attack of nerves that he fell unconscious to the ground. He was immediately carried out, and, restoratives being applied, was brought back to consciousness. The shock, however, had been too much for his strength: though the doctors strove to reassure him by informing him that the Holy Father had dispensed him from the examination, he failed to recover from his attack, and in a few hours breathed his last, in spite of all that could be done to relieve him.*

In the meanwhile Francis was undergoing his examination. In conformity with the ceremonial prescribed for these occasions, he placed himself on his knees and was then asked what sciences he had studied. He answered: "I have studied civil law, canon law, and sacred theology." "Upon which science do you wish to be interrogated?" "Upon the one which it shall please His Holiness to choose." "Make the choice yourself," was the answer. "Since the choice is left to me," he said, "and since theology is the science that belongs to my estate, I will try, with the help of God, to answer any questions put to me upon that science." Thereupon the Pope, beginning the examination, put several questions to him: then Cardinals Borromeo, Borghese, and Baronius, as well as B. Robert Bellarmine and the other examiners, interrogated him upon any point which they chose. In all, thirty-five questions were proposed to him, and he answered each with discernment and learning. To his replies they retorted with the most subtle objections: but the precision and clearness with which he resolved these gave them no advantage, and, coupled with the modesty of his bearing, excited the admiration of all present. History has preserved the record of two of the questions. One of these, proposed by B. Robert Bellarmine, turned on the formal cause of beatitude, a matter greatly controverted amongst theologians; for, while all are agreed that the possession of God forms the sovereign beatitude of the saints, there are great divergences of opinion as to the manner in which this beatitude is communicated to the soul: some place the formal cause of happiness in the understanding, that is to say, in the clear vision of the divine essence; others in the will, in the love of the Sovereign Good and the joy of possessing it; others, again, in the understanding and the will together. Francis, supporting this last opinion, answered that the happiness of the elect consists in the love of the Sovereign Good which is seen and in the vision of the Sovereign Being which is loved. Bellarmine made a strong attack upon this opinion: but Francis retorted with an equally strong defence, and eventually the learned Jesuit ended by admitting that in reality that opinion was also his own. The other question of which we have record was the last that was put to him. The Holy Father, having opened the examination, wished also to close it. He asked if bishops could dispense from the irregularity resulting from a hidden sin. "Yes," replied Francis, "except in the case of voluntary homicide or of a crime taken before an external tribunal, as is expressly taught by the Council of Trent in the sixth chapter of the twenty-fourth session, *De Reformatione*." "Do you think, then," added the Pope, "that a bishop can absolve from occult heresy?" "Yes," replied Francis; "the Council of Trent says so in explicit terms in the same place. The Church can, I know, alter this discipline, and several theologians teach that the Bull *In cœna Domini* has actually changed it; but this opinion seems to me less probable: firstly, because, as this Bull is anterior to the Council of Trent, we cannot suppose that the Popes who solemnly approved the decrees of the Council wished by the annual publication of that Bull to destroy the privilege granted by the Council; secondly, because the faculties granted by a General Council are not considered to be revoked unless that Council is specifically nominated." "My son," replied Clement VIII, "the question depends solely upon our will, and it is neither in our thought nor in our intention that bishops should have this power." "Holy Father," rejoined Francis with a profound bow, "if Your Holiness thinks thus, I give up my opinion and embrace the one you have expressed." The assembly was no less struck by the humility of this avowal than by the extent of the Provost's learning and the correctness of his reasoning. Then the Pope, turning to the cardinals, said: "None of those whom we have examined up to now has satisfied us in so complete a manner." Coming down from his throne, he made his way towards Francis, who was still kneeling, embraced him, and addressed him aloud with the words of the Proverbs: "My son, *drink water of thine own cistern and the streams of thine own well. Let thy fountains be conveyed abroad and in the streets divide thy waters.*" The prelates present at the examination then came forward to add their congratulations to those of the Sovereign Pontiff. It was not long before the city of Rome was filled with the praises of the new bishop, and people of the highest rank hastened to make his acquaintance.*

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* *Ibid.*, p. 265.

This fact was the means of bringing Francis into close relations with several cardinals, bishops, and religious in a manner that was greatly to his advantage, both personally and in his work. He formed relations with Cardinal Borghese, afterwards Paul X, consulting him about the means of strengthening the conversion of Chablais and of initiating that of Geneva. He also had several interviews with Cardinal Baronius, with whom he had been recommended to confer about some of the articles contained in the Bishop of Geneva's petition. He told the cardinal of his desire to found at Thonon or Annecy a public printing press under the protection of the Holy See, and received from the eminent prelate not only encouragement but a definite promise of help in furthering his design. As a mark of esteem, the cardinal presented Francis with a copy of his *Ecclesiastical Annals*, which had been published during the course of that year. He also delighted to take the Provost out with him in his carriage, striving to place the latter always in the place of honour. This, however, Francis refused, remarking in his own charming way—"No, Monseigneur, I will sit at the feet of Gamaliel." The Saint also exchanged several visits with B. Robert Bellarmine, delighted to profit by the learning and charm of the distinguished Jesuit.*

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* *Ibid.*, pp. 265 to 267. Hamon also quotes De Maupas, p. 155.

It was, however, with B. Juvenal Ancina that he formed the closest friendship. This holy religious afterwards became Bishop of Saluzzo, gave evidence of the greatest sanctity, and was eventually beatified by Leo XIII. In his youth he had practised as a doctor, but had given up this profession to embrace the ecclesiastical state. He had entered the Congregation of the Oratory, founded by St Philip Neri, and at this time was preaching with much success in the Oratorian Church. Having assisted at the Provost's examination, B. Juvenal went to his hotel three days afterwards, to congratulate him on the excellence of his answers. Francis received these compliments so humbly that the Oratorian, divining his genuine sanctity, was struck with admiration, and, embracing him affectionately, exclaimed: "Ah! I am happier now to see you so truly humble than even I was on the day of your examination to see you so truly learned."† This visit was followed by many others, and was the beginning of a friendship which lasted unchanging to the end.

It is evident, therefore, that though Francis was thus receiving so many marks of honour from great and distinguished men, he was not allowing this fact to turn him from the virtue that was so dear to him. It is interesting to notice the humility with which he himself writes of his examination in a letter to Canon Louis de Sales. "I confess to you openly that God did not permit that we should suffer confusion in the examination, although, looking at myself only, I expected nothing else. I assure you that the Vicar-General left the

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* Hamon quotes Dom Jean de S. F., p. 136. C. A. de S., l. iv, p. 267.

† *Année de S. F. de S.*, Mars 23.

Consistory more joyfully than I did. That faithful friend will hasten only too soon to write to Savoy about the marks of paternal kindness with which the Pope honoured me, and which will oblige me more than ever to be a good son and a good servant of the Holy Roman Church. But whatever our friends write, remember that those friends are just as much prone to exaggerate our good points as our enemies are to exaggerate our bad ones, and that, in fine, we really only are just what we are before Almighty God."*

The friendships which we have described above, however, in no way hindered him from accomplishing the business which had called him to Rome: he pursued it with activity and skill. Some there were who preferred to criticize the customary slowness of the Roman court as an excuse for their own apathy and want of diligence: he, on the contrary, praised that slowness. "For I considered," he would say, "that it is not only a sign of the wisdom of the Roman court, which does everything according to number, weight, and measure, but also an effect of the Divine Providence, which wishes to give strangers plenty of time to recommend their affairs to God and his saints, and to visit at their leisure so many places dear to our faith." But, as we have said, he persevered vigorously in the prosecution of his work. He succeeded so well that on March 24, the Pope, by letters apostolic in the form of a brief, regulated all that concerned the conversion of Chablais and the permanent establishment of parishes throughout the country by decreeing the restitution to their original purpose of the Church benefices. He referred to the wisdom of his Apostolic Nuncio in Turin all the other demands of less importance, which had been addressed to him by the Bishop of Geneva.

One thing, nevertheless, the Provost did forget, and that was to obtain the bulls for his coadjutorship. So far as he himself was concerned, he was so indifferent to his new dignity, that it never entered his mind to ask for these documents, and it was Claude de Coex, Prior of Talloires, who had to make good this omission. Nor had Francis even thought of leaving the usual fee of money for the granting of these bulls. When one of his friends reminded him of this afterwards, he replied: "I had the best reason in the world for not having deposited the money: for I had none left." "But," was the answer, "your friends would have provided some for you." "I do not want to be a bishop at the expense of my friends," rejoined Francis. "If God wants me to be one, he will see that my bulls are despatched without money." And this, as a matter of fact, is just what eventually happened.†

On March 25, having received Communion from the hand of the Sovereign Pontiff, Francis on this occasion was granted special graces the memory of which he preserved in a note, which he kept hidden till his death. It was then found amongst his papers. "Having on the day of the Annunciation received the Holy Eucharist from the hand of the Sovereign Pontiff," he wrote, "my soul was visited within itself by a great consolation, and God did me the favour of granting me a great illumination on the mystery of the Incarnation, making me understand in an inexplicable manner that the Word took a body by the power of the Holy Ghost and by the operation of the Holy Spirit in the chaste womb of Mary, willing it himself, in order to dwell amongst us as soon as he should become a man like us. This Man-God also gave me a lofty and delicious knowledge with regard to Transubstantiation, to his entry into my soul and to the ministry of the pastors of the Church."*

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* E.N., Tom. XII, Lettre CXXII, p. 6.

† Pérennès, l. iv, chap. viii, p. 409.

The Saint only remained a few more days in Rome, during which he had the happiness of saying Mass in St Peter's. Then he obtained a last audience with the Pope, in order to thank him for his kindness and to ask for his blessing, and finally, in company with the Abbé de Chissé, left Rome on March 31 for his homeward journey.

He had ever guarded such sacred memories of his first visit to Loretto in 1591 that he now wished to return home by way of that celebrated shrine. Arrived at Loretto, he made his stay at the Jesuit house, where he was treated with the utmost honour and hospitality. Thanks to their influence and the good offices of the Bishop of Loretto, to whom Francis had been recommended by B. Juvenal, he enjoyed the privilege of saying Mass in the *Santa Casa*, and once more the spirit of the place filled his soul to overflowing, especially during the action of the Mass and during his acts of thanksgiving afterwards. Realizing what a great part the Mother of God had taken in the conversion of so many heretics, he thanked Almighty God for the graces that had been granted to him through the intercession of Mary, and renewed the protestation of his boundless devotion to the Son and the Mother. Totally lost in the ecstasy of his prayer, he let the hours slip by unnoticed. Even when the Abbé de Chissé felt obliged at last to go to him and warn him that it was time to withdraw, he exclaimed: "O my brother, I beg you, out of your friendship for me, leave me here still another hour. I am renewing all the promises I made to the Mother of God during my youth."† After he had thus satisfied his devotion, he visited the treasury of the Church, where he was shown the immense riches which the generosity of the faithful had there accumulated. At the sight of the treasures he saw there he could not refrain from saying: "Would to God that His Holiness would decide to sell the greater part of these riches and use the money in carrying on the war against the Turks, those everlasting enemies of Christianity, or employ it in other good works. That I am sure would not be displeasing to the Blessed Virgin, but rather would be very agreeable to her. And, indeed, it is very much to be feared lest the pirates come one day in their strength and carry all this away."* The fear thus expressed by the Saint was to some extent prophetic.

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* *Année de S. F. de S.*, Mars 25.

† *Ibid.*, Mars 31.

During his visit to Loretto Francis also called upon the Bishop. This prelate, aware of the great merit of his visitor, gave him a most honourable welcome, and kept him for a part of the night, in order to show him the manuscript of a book that he, the Bishop, was writing, and upon which he sought the Provost's counsel.

From Loretto Francis went on to Bologna, where B. Juvenal Ancina's recommendation procured him an introduction to the Archbishop. This prelate also received him with every honour, though the state of his health at the time made a prolonged interview impossible.† Passing through Milan, where he procured for himself the *Life of St Charles*, which had just been published, Francis eventually reached Turin. There he presented to the Duke a report of his negotiations in Rome. With this the Duke was well satisfied, except with regard to the matter of the examination, which he considered to be a mistake, as being against the ancient privilege of Savoy. He was, however, mollified by the Provost's statement of the Pope's special reasons for this departure from precedent.‡ At Turin the Abbé de Chissé left the Provost, in order to hasten to Annecy, where a good deal of urgent diocesan business awaited him. Francis was obliged to stay in the capital, though this was not without danger on account of the prevalence of the plague in that region: for this cause Turin was at the time almost deserted.§ But there was a vast amount of business to be carried through before he could fully obtain the fruits of his labours in Rome. When he had communicated to the Duke the contents of the apostolic letters which the Pope was sending to the Bishop of Geneva, Charles Emmanuel, finding them in agreement with all that he had decreed the year before at Thonon, was of opinion that they ought to be submitted promptly to the Senate at Chambéry for verification and registration, and then put into execution without delay. But this was reckoning without the Knights of SS Maurice and Lazarus. These gentlemen, hearing of the blow which threatened them, hastened to present a petition to His Highness. "We have learnt," they said, "that the Coadjutor of Geneva has brought back from Rome a brief of the Sovereign Pontiff, which strips our Order of the benefices and of all the other ecclesiastical property situated in the bailiwick of Chablais and Ternier, contrary to the brief of Gregory XIII, under pretext that this is for the support of the priests who have been, or are about to be, established there. It is not our intention to inconvenience or hinder in any way so holy an enterprise: we protest, on the contrary, that we are ready to do everything reasonable to second it. But it seems contrary to reason that, after having given to the parish priests a suitable, and more than suitable, grant, we should be despoiled of the other revenues and especially of those abbeys and priories to which no cure of souls is attached. Such a proceeding is prejudicial to the rights of His Highness and of his successors, because of the right of patronage and nomination. We ask that it be Your Highness's good pleasure to command a stay of execution until we have been summoned to a discussion of all the revenues and until the letters, brought back by the Bishop-elect of Geneva, have been communicated to us."*

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* C. A. de. S., l. iv, p. 268.

† E.N., Tom. XII, Lettre CXXIII.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

§ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

The Duke considered himself obliged to defer to the representations of the Knights. Granting their request, he decreed on April 29 that there should be a stay of execution of the apostolic brief; that communication of this brief, together with the reasons for its promulgation, should be made to the Knights; and that, finally, their protest should be conveyed to the Coadjutor, in order that he might give an answer thereto within the space of two days.

In his reply Francis remarked, first of all, that he himself had no right over the property mentioned in the request, nor did he put forward any claim thereto: consequently he did not wish to stand as a party against the supplicants. The apostolic brief, brought by him from the Holy See, was asked, granted, and obtained for the service of God, of the Church, and of His Highness: it was for the Prince to maintain it, and not for him, the Provost de Sales, who only carried and presented it as a mere servant, and who had no other interest in the matter than the general interest of the advancement of God's Kingdom on earth. Nevertheless, if it pleased His Highness that the Provost of Sales, in his quality of servant, should expound the reason of the Pope's will, as contained in the brief, he would say that the brief of our Holy Father, Clement VIII, was in conformity with that of Gregory XIII, put forward by the supplicants, to whom the same Pope, foreseeing the very thing which had happened in their time under the authority of His Highness, granted the benefices of the bailiwicks to the Order (as being at that time useless for their proper purpose, which was indubitably the support of the Church's ministers) with this condition, that as soon as the inhabitants of those places should, through the mercy of the Lord, receive the light of faith, wherever this might happen, the Ordinaries of those districts should institute parish churches and other ecclesiastical places suitable for the exercise of the cure of souls, by means of a suitable endowment from these same properties; that these parishes should be of a just and sufficient number; and that capable rectors and pastors should be provided for these parishes by the Ordinaries, in accordance with the dispensation of the Council of Trent and other canonical decrees. Which condition was added in favour of our cause.

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* Opuscules (Blaise, 1821), p. 140.

And even if such a condition had not been placed to the brief of Gregory XIII, the Pope of the day, who possessed absolute power of dispensation in the matter, had disposed of it in favour of the people and the advancement of the Christian religion, as was evident in his brief. Nevertheless, in this brief there was nothing unfair to the Order any more than there was in that of Gregory, of which it was but a declaration for the removal of all possible doubt.

It appeared that the Order considered the later brief harsh, because it was being deprived of every kind of benefice. But the condition said distinctly "of the property of the same goods," and the Council of Trent gives (the bishops) the power of assigning suitable shares from all benefices.

The Order complained, moreover, that this was being done under the pretext of furnishing support for the priests. But there was no pretext about it; it was a pure and holy reality. . . .

The Knights complained that the fixing of the incomes was left to the Bishop. But both the Council of Trent and the condition put by Gregory stated in express terms that this matter was to be left to the discretion of the bishops.

The Knights expressed the wish that the number of priests should be confined to what was decided upon when His Highness was at Thonon. But that number, scarcely sufficient for the purpose, was not in actuality being exceeded. Moreover, if experience taught them that more were needed, ought anyone to put a hindrance thereto? On this point the Provost remarked that their need of funds for rebuilding and refurnishing was sufficient guarantee that the number of priests would be reduced to the limit.

The Knights complained that the brief had been granted without their being given an opportunity of stating their case. But the condition put by Gregory, to which they had consented, dispensed with the necessity of hearing them.

What reason could the Knights bring forward for opposing this brief? They could not oppose it either on a point of law or on a point of fact. Not on a point of law—viz., the putting forth of the brief of Gregory—for Pope Clement inserted it almost in its entirety in his own brief; he was ignorant of nothing which it contained, and acted upon certain and sure knowledge. Not on a point of fact, unless they denied the conversion of these people. That assuredly they could not do. Moreover, even if there had been only ten in each parish free to exercise their religion, the Pope could still have disposed (as he had done) in their favour.

The Order was putting forward two objections: one was the fear of abuse in the execution of the brief. In answer to that he replied that it always lay open for the Knights to make complaint of such an abuse, without it being necessary to delay the course of the general execution of the brief, necessary as it was. Secondly, they feared for the right of nomination. (This was an allusion to the fact that by the execution of the brief the Duke would lose the right of nomination to a certain number of military commanderies, which would have to be suppressed, and would so lose a number of men devoted by the force of patronage to his service.) The Provost, by way of reply, asked if the parish priests would not be equally the servants and subjects of His Highness. Moreover, the least soul, the least Mass, (if one could call least things of such importance as souls and the greatest of all sacrifices) were worth more for the good of His Highness than all the nominations together.

As to the revenues, they did not amount to a total sufficient to do all that was necessary.

If, as the Knights said, they were willing to second the conversion of Chablais, they could do no better than cease their opposition to the execution of the brief.

Finally, the good of the people ought to be the sovereign law. No individual would retain for himself the smallest part of these properties or revenues, certainly neither the Bishop of Geneva nor the Provost. They would give an exact account of the whole revenue in the presence of one of His Highness's officials or even of several.

For all these reasons he, the Provost of Sales, the servant, subject and petitioner of His Highness, begged of him for the love of God that the execution of the brief should not be retarded in any way, but rather advanced, maintained, and supported by the necessary graces and favours. And as servant and petitioner of the Knights, he begged them to be satisfied with seeing clearly that no abuse was committed, and not to regard as an act against their interest what he had done for the cause of religion, without any evil disposition of heart against the honour and service he owed to all.*

The Duke, having read this response, passed it on to the Knights: these gentlemen, finding nothing to answer, made no counter-reply, but devoted themselves to hindering the execution of the brief by every means in their power. Now, Francis realized that unless he obtained funds at once, his work in Chablais would be seriously and irreparably retarded. Neither was his continued presence in Turin doing any good to his missions. Fearing to lose altogether the advantages to be gained from the brief, he resolved to content himself with less than his full rights. He no longer asked that all the benefices

* C. A. de S., l. iv, p. 270 *et seq.* Opuscules, p. 143.

should be restored, but only such as were strictly necessary for the needs of the mission at that time: if these were handed over promptly by the Order, he consented to relinquish his claim to the rest and to leave it in the hands of the Knights. For this purpose he wrote another long request to the Duke, from which we take the following:

"By a decree of April 29 of this year Your Highness has ordered that the execution of the brief be stayed. The result of this is that these poor converts remain deprived of all the means requisite for the practice of that holy religion which they have embraced through the influence of Your Highness. . . . Wherefore I, who have received command to await Your Highness's good pleasure therein, very humbly beg you, in consideration of the importance of a matter in which delay means ruin, that you would be pleased to order one or other of two things: either that the brief of His Holiness should be put into execution without delay, with permission for the Knights to have recourse to the proper authority in case of abuse; or that one of the members of the Senate or of the Chamber of Finance should supervise the execution of the brief by the Bishop of Geneva, and that, in order to render all accusation of abuse impossible, the Order should be represented in this supervision by one of the gentlemen of its council. Now, I assure Your Highness that, in the execution of this brief, the Right Reverend Bishop of Geneva will most strictly observe the following conditions: that he will not go beyond the number of priests necessary for the work . . .; that the amount levied for the necessary service of God shall be taken from all the benefices of the two bailiwicks, not only from those hitherto possessed by the Order but from certain others as well . . .; that he will make a just valuation of each benefice and will not go beyond what is necessary in fixing the proper revenues or the amount needed for the other essential works of religion; and that, although the whole existing revenue of Chablais would hardly suffice for what ought to be done at this beginning of things, the Bishop will, nevertheless, restrict himself to what is absolutely necessary, leaving it to the piety of Your Highness to provide for the college of Jesuits, as already arranged between you and the General of the Order, and for those further developments in the service of God the importance of which is well known to Your Highness's zeal. . . ."*

The Duke, convinced of the truth of these representations, immediately gave his consent to the execution of the brief. He delegated M. de Rochette, First President of the Senate, and Chevalier Joseph de Ruffia, Grand Prior of the Order in Piedmont, to supervise this execution and to ensure the absence of all grounds of complaint on either side. As may be imagined, the Provost's joy at this success was not without alloy. He had been the victim of so much disappointment in the past that he was disinclined to congratulate himself upon the success of his labours until he actually saw it, as it were, in his hands. He was fully prepared for further opposition and equally ready to counter it with all his power and determination. He was perfectly aware of the strong feeling against himself amongst the Knights of the Order. and he knew that he was arousing a deep rancour not only against himself but, what he regretted still more, against his family. Nevertheless, he put these considerations on one side, ready to sacrifice every worldly advantage in the prosecution of that service of God to which he had devoted his whole being and all his life. Something of his determination is seen in the strength of the terms in which he wrote to the Chevalier de Ruffia. "I beg Your Lordship to be so kind as to reflect that at this stage of things the delay of our work is equivalent to its ruin: for the workers, finding themselves deprived of all provision, can continue there in such a state for but the shortest time. It results from this that you are absolutely bound in conscience to come without delay, since upon your coming depends the success of the enterprise and since without your presence we can do nothing. Please remember that this is a matter of the service of God, any neglect of which draws down upon the guilty the divine malediction, and forgive me if with so much frankness I exhort you to come without delay, for I feel myself obliged to do so. Besides, I consider that I am dealing with a person of such discernment, that he will easily recognize the urgency of our necessity. For this reason, I venture to repeat that, putting aside every consideration, either of the contagious epidemic or of other difficulties, Your Lordship is absolutely obliged to come as soon as possible to where I myself am awaiting you, with the intention of remaining there and wherever else I may happen to be."*

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* C. A. de S., l. iv, p. 273.

While the Provost was thus negotiating with the Duke and his officials the business of the benefices, he was also treating with the Nuncio about the various matters which the Pope had referred to that prelate. Here, again, he found difficulties, for the Nuncio was unwilling to take upon himself the responsibility of settling them. Francis, therefore, contented himself with writing a number of reports, embodying the reasons for the various changes suggested, and delivering them to the Nuncio. The latter promised to refer them to Cardinal Aldobrandini, who had been specially appointed by the Pope to look after religious affairs in Chablais.

Having finished his work at Turin, Francis turned his steps once more to Savoy, and arrived at Annecy on June 1. Here he was received with the greatest joy by all his friends and by the people of the city. It was during this stay at Annecy, before he proceeded to Thonon, that an event occurred which raised him still higher in the estimation of all. A woman living in the next house to his own was in danger of death in the throes of an unsuccessful labour: by the force of his prayers and the application of a girdle from Loretto, which was used as a kind of sacramental, the Saint gained for the sufferer the favour of a safe and painless delivery.*

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* E.N., Tom. XII, Lettre CXXIV, p. 14.

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* C. A. de S., l. iv.

CHAPTER XIII *

(1599–1601)

Francis returns to Thonon after visit to Sales—Conversion of De Brotty and companions—"The Defence of the Standard of the Cross"—Sickness—Francis goes to Chambéry—Returns to Thonon—Visitation of Mgr. Gribaldi—Chambéry again—Petitions to the Duke—Francis goes to Annecy—Lent at Thonon—War with France—Francis accompanies the Bishop at interview with Henry IV in Annecy—Deputation of Genevans to the King—Destruction of Fort St Catherine—Partial return of Calvinists to Chablais—Francis is taken prisoner by the French—Interview with the Governor—Last illness and death of M. de Boisy—Lenten station at Annecy—End of the war—Missionary labours in Gaillard—Affairs of Gex—Conversion of De La Faverge—Visit to Lyons—Then to Gex—Opposition of Lesdiguières—Francis assists the Bishop in Gaillard

FROM Annecy Francis went to the château of Sales, where he spent a few days in the company of his parents and family (June, 1599). But as soon as he had fulfilled this filial duty, he made his way promptly to Thonon, where Mgr. de Granier was anxiously awaiting him. The Abbé de Chissé had, on his return from Rome, handed over to the Bishop the Pope's brief, appointing Francis to the coadjutorship of Geneva with right of succession, as well as letters from several of the Roman Cardinals expressing the esteem and admiration which the whole court of Rome had conceived for the saintly missionary. Rejoiced at the reception of these documents, the Bishop commissioned his chaplain, Hilaire Furier, to make several copies of them, saying as he did so: "Take care to store in your memory everything that you are now doing: for a day will come when you will have to give an exact account of it all." The aged Bishop foresaw that some time in the future the life of his new Coadjutor would be the subject of that rigorous investigation which precedes the rite of canonization, and, as a matter of fact, Hilaire Furier was one of the first to be called in after days as a witness to the sanctity of Francis de Sales.†

On meeting once more his beloved Provost, the Bishop received him with the greatest joy and affection, clasping him in his arms, and thanking God aloud for the gift of such an auxiliary in the government of his vast diocese. When the first greetings were over, Mgr. de Granier immediately began to discuss his plans for their relations in the future. He declared that henceforward all the revenues of the bishopric should be divided between them equally, "for," he added, "justice demands that on sharing my troubles you should also share these resources, which will become necessary to you for your upkeep and position." Francis, however, refused this generous offer in the most absolute manner, protesting that of all those things which were connected with the episcopate he desired nothing but the trouble and the work. The Bishop then suggested that Francis should be consecrated as soon as the bulls, which were expected from day to day, arrived from the eternal city. But here again the Provost demurred, and begged that his consecration might be deferred till later, so that he might go on living as long as possible as a simple priest, having no more desire for the honours of the episcopate than he had for its wealth.*

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* Hamon, l. iii, chap. ii.

† Pérennès, l. iv, chap. x, p. 420.

As soon as the Provost returned to his work in Thonon, he had the happiness of discovering that in spite of the intrigues of Geneva none of his converts had shown the slightest signs of looking backward and that, in addition, there were a number of fresh conversions. This happiness was doubled on learning that the Calvinist gentlemen who had taken refuge at Nyon were thinking of entering the pale of the Church. Wearied with their exile, they had recourse to the Provost's charity, and asked him to be their mediator with the Duke of Savoy. Francis fulfilled this mission so successfully that he obtained for them a safe-conduct, enabling them to return to their homes. De Brotty and his companions hastened to avail themselves of the favour, and a short time after their return called upon the Provost in order to thank him for his efforts on their behalf. What followed after can best be described in Colonel Brotty's own words: "The *Beatus* [*i.e.*, Francis de Sales] was accustomed to convict heretics of error by means of their own books: and he dealt with the Seigneurs Joly, Deprez, and myself in the same way. He showed us the preface to Beza's commentary on Josue, where the writer says that Calvin had been the first to discover the true interpretation of the Last Supper (*Calvin premier avait trouvé la façon de la Cène*), throwing over in this manner the whole of antiquity. Upon this I went to Geneva, and submitted the passage to La Faye, the first minister and one with the greatest reputation. He admitted that Beza had erred, and thenceforward this book was suppressed and the ministers had the copies destroyed. La Faye, seeing himself pressed by difficulties which I proposed to him, was forced to admit that *one could save one's soul in the Catholic religion*: which was the cause of my conversion and of that of the above-named gentlemen, to whom I communicated the results of my journey." In another part of his deposition the Colonel, when speaking of the Saint's gentleness and good nature, humbly remarks: "During the time when he was working untiringly at my conversion, I allowed myself to be carried away by tempers capable of exasperating the most patient." He ended this part of his testimony by saying: "The noblemen and most important men of Chablais, and particularly I myself, take pride to this very day in having been his spiritual children."*

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* Pérennès (l. iv, chap. x, p. 421), quoting MS. of De Baudry and dep. of Canon Gard.

Towards the end of July the Provost stayed some days at Sales, waiting for the arrival in Chablais of the Chevalier de Ruffia. It was then, doubtless, that he put the last touches to a work which he had had in hand for some time: this was the *Defence of the Standard of the Holy Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.* It was despatched a short time afterwards to Lyons, where it was printed in the spring of the following year by Jean Pillehotte, at the sign of the *Name of Jesus.*

"This book," says the Abbé Hamon, "is a treatise admirable for its order, method, logic, and penetration. All the most convincing passages that can be drawn from Scripture, the Fathers and other ecclesiastical authors in defence of the worship of the Cross, all the light that reason is capable of throwing upon the Catholic teaching thereon, is brought to bear upon the elucidation of each question, in order to upset the statements of his adversary† . . ., and to oblige him either to *overthrow reason* and *swear hostility against it* or to surrender to the force of proof and the evidence of testimony. He begins with an introduction in which he shows that, while to God alone belongs the right of sovereign honour, one may render to certain creatures an inferior religious honour, bearing relation to God as the author of the good which exists in them or which is accomplished through their instrumentality; and that just as in proportion to the dignity of a person we honour all that belongs to him or concerns him, so also we should be wanting in the respect due to Jesus Christ if we refused to honour the Cross, which was his throne, his altar, and his death-bed. After this, entering upon his subject, the writer divides his treatise into four books. In the first he deals with the honour due to that cross upon which our Lord actually died, and which is ordinarily called the *True Cross.* He shows first of all that, if God has given virtue to things belonging to his saints, as he did to the mantle of Elias, the rod of Moses, and the handkerchiefs of St Paul, he must surely have granted a much greater power to the Cross of his Son. *The virtue which is found in the streams flowing from such a source is found still more plentifully in the source itself*, says the saintly controversialist: not, however, that he considered that the

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* Dep. Col. de Brotty. First process of canonization.

† The Minister de la Faye.

Cross had power in itself; God it is, he says, who delights to hono it by working miracles through its means, when such seems go to him: *the Cross is but the instrument of the favours granted, God alo is their author.* The Protestants objected that Holy Scripture sa nothing about the worship due to the Cross. 'Even if the Scriptu does say nothing about it, what does that matter?' is his answer the third chapter. Therein he enumerates a number of doctrin points, about which Scripture says nothing, and which are, neverthe less, held as incontestable by the Protestants themselves. Never theless, he is far from granting to them that it is impossible to establis through Scripture the propriety of paying honour to the True Cross On the contrary, he points out in the fourth chapter that, if Scriptur teaches us to respect the Ark of the Covenant, which it shows to u surrounded by so much honour, and the hem of Jesus Christ's garmen which by its mere contact healed the woman with the issue of blood, much more so does it teach us, at least implicitly, the worship due to the Cross, when it presents that Cross to us, dyed in the blood of God, become the sign of his royalty, *factus est principatus super humerum ejus*, his triumphal chariot, the altar of his sacrifice, and, according to the saying of the Apostle who placed in Jesus crucified all his glory, the most magnificent title of his greatness and nobility. On the proofs drawn from Scripture follow others, taken, some from the miraculous preservation of the Cross within the earth for three centuries, others from the marvels which accompanied its finding, and others still from the devotion shown towards the sacred wood during the course of the passing ages. All this he develops fully by means of the finest quotations from the fathers and writers of the Church.

"After having vindicated the worship of the True Cross, the author passes on to the worship of those crosses which are its image or representation, and he proves by the writings of the earliest fathers, such as St Justin, Tertullian and St Athanasius, that the first Christians both made crosses and honoured them. Then, following the course of the centuries, he shows us the Cross placed with honour in churches and in houses, by the wayside and in the public squares, borne in processions and ceremonies, saluted respectfully by priests when they go to the altar, invoked by so many of the beautiful prayers of the Church . . ., in fine, treated in all places and at all times with the most unequivocal marks of veneration. He shows that God himself has consecrated the image of the Cross, either when he revealed it to Constantine and gave it to him as a gage of victory with the words *In this sign thou shalt conquer*, or when later he stamped it on the clothing of the Jews who were striving to rebuild the Temple at Jerusalem under Julian the Apostate, or when through its use he worked so many miracles chronicled in the history of the Church, or when, finally, he announces its solemn apparition in the heavens on the day of the last judgement. To these proofs from authority he adds proofs from reason, and demonstrates that one owes to the Cross a religious honour, because it is the memorial of Jesus crucified, the epitome of all the principal dogmas of our faith, and a source of holy thoughts and useful reflections; in fine, he shows that its only enemies are the enemies of Jesus Christ, and that God has often punished in the most remarkable manner those who have committed outrages against it. After having spoken of the image of the Cross, the author treats of the sign of the Cross which we make upon ourselves in memory of Jesus crucified. 'This sign,' he says, 'has in itself no virtue; but when made in God's honour, to represent the Cross, it becomes a sacred ceremony which God often uses for the working of wonderful results.' After having explained clearly the way in which it is made, he demonstrates that this sign is a public profession of the Christian faith, that the whole of antiquity used it, that the Church from the very first centuries has employed it for blessing, for consecrating, for administering the sacraments, especially Baptism, and develops in a remarkable manner the power of this sign against Satan, against temptations, and against every kind of danger.

"Having proved by the development of these three points that we are bound to venerate the Cross in some way or other, there only remained to explain precisely the kind of worship or adoration which is due to it: such is the object of the fourth book. There the author distinguishes two kinds of adoration: the one which is due to God alone, and which consists in that homage of respect and profound submission by which we recognize the infinite excellence and supreme sovereignty of him who is adored; the other, altogether different, which consists in honouring in a creature certain eminent qualities which God has bestowed upon it; it is in this latter sense that Scripture speaks of the adoration of kings and of other great personages. Having established this distinction, he proves that Catholics, when saluting or incensing the Cross or even in bowing down before it, only intend to render to it the inferior homage due to an image favoured by Almighty God and honoured by him with miracles and graces; and he demonstrates that external signs instituted by men have no other meaning beyond what is intended by the users thereof, and that the word *adoration* signifies just that quality of worship alone which the Catholic employing it chooses to intend."*

The work entailed by the completion of this book, the fatigue of carrying on a vast amount of difficult business, and, above all, the disappointment and anxiety caused by De Ruffia's continued absence, so undermined the health of the Provost, that about the end of summer he was once more prostrated by illness. In the month August, however, he was able to journey to Chambéry, for the purp of pursuing his claim to the benefice of Petit-Bornand, which was s occupied by Nicholas Bally. From this town he wrote to the Nunc on August 24, 1599: this letter gives such an excellent descripti of his difficulties that we venture to give several extracts from it, ev at the risk of a slight repetition.

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* Hamon, Tom. I, p. 380. Students who wish to learn more of this work, its various editions, and the answer of La Faye, should consult Dom Mackey's introduction to vol. ii of the E.N. of Oeuvres Complètes.

"Happening at this moment to be at Chambéry, I am able write to Your Lordship and to inform you that, while the busine of converting Chablais and the two other bailiwicks is enduring r set-back, neither, on the other hand, is it making much advanc For progress depends on the offices and exercise of Catholic worshi which, for want of money and other necessary means, cannot b carried on with that decency and distinction which would be suitabl in these days of initiation. As a matter of fact, the ecclesiastics c these parts have not even the resources strictly necessary for thei maintenance: in such a way that, if our Right Reverend Lord Bisho had not cajoled them with caresses and fair words, not half the clerg would have remained. The cause of all this is that . . . the Chevalie de Ruffia, who, when I left Turin, was to have come immediately has never appeared. And it cannot be denied that in this he is guilty either of extreme negligence or of a deliberate delay in order to maintain the Knights in the unjust possession of these benefices. . . .

"On the other hand, the Genevans and other enemies in the neighbourhood never fail to oppose the progress of our holy work by spreading threats and rumours of war. They are also circulating books and writings, and are secretly sending amongst the people spies and corrupters of souls. At any rate, their diligence for evil condemns the negligence of Catholics for good. However, it is quite true that amongst the converts none has yet shown any sign of looking backward: they are ever growing stronger in the faith, whilst several other people who were amongst the most obstinate in their heresy have been converted. . . .

"The Bishop of Geneva is at Thonon, which he does not dare to leave until things are established and solidly strengthened. Father Bernadino Castorio, the Jesuit, is also with him. I have come here for the lawsuit about my benefice of Petit-Bornand, which, having been granted to me through the favour of Your Most Reverend Lordship, is occupied by others without title of right, and I hope that in a short time I shall see myself delivered from these competitors."*

About this time there arrived in Savoy an illustrious prelate, delegated by the Holy See to make an enquiry into the state of religion in the converted bailiwicks. This was Mgr. Vespasian Gribaldi, formerly Archbishop of Vienne. Francis followed him to Thonon, where the Bishop received them both with the warmest welcome.

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* E.N., Tom. XII, Lettre CXXVI, p. 17 *et seq.*

On his arrival at Thonon, Mgr. Gribaldi informed the inhabitants of the affection and solicitude which the Holy Father entertained for his newly-gained children of Chablais. The latter answered with a letter wherein they expressed their deep gratitude for the paternal kindness of the Holy See, acknowledged the Pope as the only pastor of the fold of Jesus Christ, and begged him ever to bestow upon them the benefit of his fatherly affection. The drawing up of this letter was entrusted, need it be said, to their beloved apostle.

The Bishop having now departed from Thonon, Francis was left there alone, to pursue with his usual industry the numerous tasks that came to hand. In addition to his continual preaching and the ordinary routine work of a large parish, he found himself obliged to write a number of important letters: to the Nuncio for the purpose of keeping him informed of all that happened; to the Duke in order to beg him to begin the founding of the "Holy House" designed for Thonon; to the Provincial of the Jesuits with a view to hastening the arrival of the six fathers whom the Pope had offered to keep out of his own pocket; and to Philip de Quoex, in order to recommend to that gentleman's care his brother, Louis de Sales and the two sons of President Favre, who were going to Rome for their studies. Finally, he gave every assistance in his power to the papal delegate, of whose capability and energy he had already formed the highest opinion.*

When Mgr. Gribaldi had finished his enquiry, he forwarded the results of his work to Rome in a most favourable report: "The number of converts," he wrote, "which has grown by a thousand since last Easter, has now risen to more than twelve thousand in the two bailiwicks of Chablais and Ternier. In the rural parishes they form an immense majority and are continually increasing in devotion: the others are well disposed towards conversion. At Thonon, out of 2,000 souls, 500 communicants were counted at Paschal time: and every day new abjurations are being received. . . ."

A few days after the completion of this enquiry, Francis went to Chambéry in order to seek audience with the Duke. Charles Emmanuel, at this moment, was on the point of setting out for France, with the intention of carrying on diplomatic negotiations with Henry IV anent the marquisate of Saluzzo. In the name of Mgr. de Granier, Francis presented three petitions to the Duke. The first of these was that His Highness would order the immediate execution of the brief concerning the benefices of Chablais without further formalities or delay. He urged that this was a purely spiritual

* E.N., Tom. XII, pp. 23 to 41.

matter already adjudicated by the Pope, who possessed sovereign rights over all ecclesiastical benefices; that it was an affair of Church order and discipline of which the Sovereign Pontiff was judge, arbitrator, and dispenser; and that all these benefices of Chablais and Ternier, although they had been assigned to others or had been sold and alienated by the Protestants, had now by the fact of the conversion of these regions, regained their proper nature, which, as being the property of God, was that they were perpetually inalienable. It was unfortunately true that those who had bought these benefices would, by the proposed restoration, suffer some loss: but the interests of these people could hardly be placed before that of God and his Church, and satisfaction could be made to them in several other just and lawful ways.

The second petition was that the priory of Thonon and the deanery of Anthy should be placed at the disposal of the Bishop, in order that their revenues might be employed for the upkeep of the curé, priests, and preachers established at Thonon and for the preparation of the Jesuit college. Inasmuch as the people of Thonon had received this benefice from the Bernese for the sum of forty-five thousand florins and had since sold some of the capital property for more than fifty thousand florins, the Provost suggested that they were already sufficiently indemnified for the loss which they would suffer. As to the deanery of Anthy, the Seigneur of Charmoisy, who had bought that benefice, might be recompensed in some other way by His Highness. Finally, the Provost asked that the benefice of the Church of Armoy, with its two dependencies, and the priory of Draillans, possessed hitherto by the Genevans, might be bestowed upon the Chapter of the cathedral church.

The Duke, finding these requests to be perfectly just and reasonable, granted them all.*

In addition to this business, the Provost was occupied in negotiating several other matters. Writing from Chambéry on December 9, 1599, to the Nuncio about the result of these negotiations, he adds: "I am arriving to-morrow at Annecy, in order to go thence to Thonon for the feast of Christmas, if need be."† To Thonon, indeed, he went, for it was from that town that he wrote a letter about this time to Cardinal Baronius, whom the Pope had just appointed protector of the proposed *Holy House.*

Returning to Annecy at the beginning of the year 1600, he hastened to inform the Nuncio about the state of religious affairs in Chablais. He also received at this conjuncture the Bull *Redemptoris*, in which the Sovereign Pontiff nominated him Prefect of the future University of Chablais, and gave him power to draw up the necessary statutes and regulations. He immediately set himself to work, and during the winter composed the constitutions, of which we shall speak later on. During the penitential season he also preached a course of Lenten sermons and conducted the various religious exercises for the faithful at Thonon.

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* C. A. de S., l. iv, p. 277.

† E.N., Tom. XII, Lettre CXXXI, p. 38.

Meanwhile the Senate had at last authorized the apostolic bulls relating to the benefices of Chablais and had given permission for their execution. On hearing of this, the Bishop of Geneva convoked the Synod, and, by means of a notice fastened to the doors of the cathedral at Annecy and of the church of St Hippolytus at Thonon, summoned before it all those who possessed benefices in Chablais and Ternier, in order that they might produce their titles. Only six of the beneficiaries answered the summons, including the Provost as Curé of Corsier and the Primicerius of Angeville as Prior of Douvaine.

Two months afterwards, when everything was ready, the Bishop went to Chablais, accompanied by Francis de Sales, by the Primicerius of Angeville, and by the President de Rochette, in order to arrange with their help the organization of the parishes. This work was on the point of accomplishment when a series of political events took place such as very nearly destroyed the result of all their labours during the last few years.

The Duke, in a diplomatic visit which he had paid to Henry IV at the beginning of the year 1600, had signed an agreement on February 27 with the French King either to restore the marquisate of Saluzzo or to surrender the country of Bresse. It is perfectly clear that the Duke had no intention of keeping this agreement if he could help it. After his return to Savoy, he continued his negotiations with the King by means of representatives, and eventually agreed to keep Saluzzo, and to give up the territory of Bresse. In the meanwhile, supported by Spain, he was carrying on a series of intrigues with the disaffected subjects of the French King, and notably with Marshal de Biron, with a view to creating a state of affairs in France which would make it possible for him to evade his agreement, keep both the districts mentioned, and even take possession of other territory. It is asserted that both Spain and the Duke were parties to a plot, to be executed by Biron, for the kidnapping, and even the murder, of the French King. Eventually, Henry IV, tired of the Duke's continued failure to keep his word, broke off all negotiations, and sent Charles Emmanuel an ultimatum, giving him till August 16, 1600, to make a definite decision. Before that date, however, Henry intercepted letters, which proved that the Duke was playing a double game, and he immediately set his troops in motion. One army, under the Duke de Lesdiguières, the Huguenot general, entered Savoy about August 13 and conquered a great part of that country: another army, under Biron, who was still in the full trust of Henry IV, overran the whole of Bresse. Chambéry, utterly defenceless, was obliged to capitulate. Henry himself, accompanied by other troops, came in the direction of Annecy. This town and district, belonging to the Duke of Nemours, under the suzerainty of Savoy, was neutral, for Nemours was under obligation to both sides. The mystery of the whole of this business was the unpreparedness or the supineness of Charles Emmanuel: in view of his reputation as a politician, he ought surely to have foreseen the outbreak of war; and in view of his military talent, admitted by the whole of Europe, he might have been expected to put up a more effective struggle in the defence of his territory. So slight was the resistance offered to the French that Henry was able to write to Mary de Medicis, his fiancée, that the only thing which was wanting to them was an enemy. Some urge that the Duke of Savoy's conduct at this time was a proof of his complicity in the murder conspiracy. They assert that he was in continual relations with Biron the whole time, and was expecting every moment to hear from the Marshal of Henry IV's death. Granting that Biron really intended to take the King's life—an act for which he had innumerable opportunities—it is evident that, when opportunity came, he could never bring himself to the actual commission of such a crime against a man to whom he actually owed his own life in the days of their former wars. Be all this as it may, Charles Emmanuel's territory was soon so completely in the hands of the French, that Henry ironically alluded to him as the "Duke without Savoy."*

The joy and expectation of Geneva and Berne at this disaster to their enemy can easily be imagined. Henry IV in the days of the religious wars had been their ally, and ever since his conversion to Catholicism he had remained their friend and protector. They were now hoping that, under cover of the war, Calvinism would regain all that it had lost during the mission of Chablais. The Genevans immediately sent envoys to the French King, and offered the help of their troops, to enable him to take possession of Chablais and Ternier.† This offer was accepted with gratitude. As a reward for their help, they begged the King to extend to the whole of Chablais the legislation of the Edict of Nantes, by which the exercise of the Protestant religion was permitted throughout the whole of the kingdom of France. Henry IV was not slow to grasp the full significance of this petition. He understood well enough that, under the pretext of the free exercise of religion, the Calvinists would do their utmost to worry both the newly converted people and the

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* Hamon, vol. i, p. 384; Mugnier's *Histoire du Président Favre*, chap. xii; and Zeller's *Henri IV*.

† Fazy in his book on the Escalade asserts, on the contrary, that it was Henry who asked for assistance from Geneva; yet he certainly was in no need of their help.

Catholic clergy, that they would strive to take possession of the churches and ecclesiastical revenues, and would endeavour to induce the people to return to the Protestant belief. Now it is quite clear that, whatever may have been his real motives when he first embraced Catholicity, the King had since become a sincere believer in the ancient religion. Of this there is ample proof, and we shall see further evidence of it in the course of this work. He was not desirous to see the Catholic cause suffer. Consequently, he did not hasten to give an answer to the request of the Swiss republic. Profiting by this delay, Mgr. de Granier wrote promptly to Mgr. Secusio, Nuncio Extraordinary to France, and to Cardinal de Joyeuse, both of whom were at that time with the King. In these letters he begged the two prelates to use all their influence with Henry to avert the misfortune which seemed to threaten. At the same time he despatched his Coadjutor to the Duke of Nemours, in order to beg that prince to obtain of Henry that no change should be made in Chablais with regard to religion. The Duke, who, as we have seen, had remained neutral in the war, wrote to the King, as the Bishop had asked: but for some reason or other his letter seems to have made little impression.

Thereupon the Bishop, alarmed at the danger of his beloved converts, decided to appeal in person to Henry IV, and, in company with his Coadjutor, sought the presence of the French monarch at the château of Annecy, in the early days of October, 1600. Though Francis accompanied the Bishop at this time, he does not seem to have spoken to the King or even to have been introduced to him. For later on Francis himself speaks to M. de Vitry as if he had not yet been presented, and, in a letter, dated May 21, 1602, the Saint informs his correspondent that he had not spoken to the King until their meeting at Fontainebleau. It is certain, however, that he was present in Annecy during these days. For his name is mentioned in some ancient chronicles of the occasion, published by M. Mugnier in his *Petites Annales d'Annecy*. "On the 8th day of the same month (October) His Majesty came to hear Mass at St Francis's, in the doorway of which church he was received by the Right Rev. Bishop of Geneva, accompanied by the Provost de Sales and other canons of the said church, where the Lord Bishop presented to him the foot of the crucifix, carried by the said Lord Provost, to kiss, which he did with great reverence. All during the Mass His Majesty held my said Lord Bishop by the hand; and they talked for a long time together."

On the occasion when Mgr. de Granier presented his petition to the King the latter received him with the utmost graciousness and respect, remaining uncovered, with his hat in his hand throughout the interview. The Bishop had committed his request to writing: in it he begged His Majesty to maintain unharmed all that had been so successfully accomplished for the Catholic faith in Chablais and Ternier. After having read the petition, the King answered: "For the love of God and of our Holy Father the Pope, and also out of consideration for you, Sir, who have so worthily acquitted yourself of your ministry, there shall be no change whatever in all that has been done for the Catholic faith in Chablais. I promise you this on my word as a King. I will be faithful to that promise, even be it at the risk of my life."* After these energetic words, he wrote at the bottom of the petition that such was his will, appending to it his signature. He then communicated his wishes in the matter to Nicholas de Harlay, Seigneur of Sancy, whom he appointed Governor of the Bailiwicks.

A short time after this a deputation of Genevans, headed by Beza, came to visit the King, whilst he was besieging the Fort St Catherine in the neighbourhood of their city. At the outset of the ceremonial harangue with which they addressed him, Henry divined that they had a request to make of him and that the request would be a repetition of their former demand as to the Edict of Nantes. Not wishing to have the unpleasantness of refusing them, the wily *Béarnais* put them off with the greatest skill and presence of mind. Interrupting their speech with that frank and engaging brusqueness which often masked his cleverest manœuvres, he exclaimed: "I know—I know what you would desire of me. You want the destruction of Fort St Catherine. A number of people are trying to dissuade me from it, but I am anxious to do you a favour. The fort shall be demolished." The Genevans, surprised and delighted at this unexpected piece of good fortune, burst out into expressions of gratitude. Fort St Catherine, a constant threat in their immediate neighbourhood, was one of their greatest bugbears. As they tried to express their gratitude, the King saluted them, and they suddenly found themselves dismissed, full of joy indeed, but realizing, doubtless, in a short time that they had not received the favour which was the object of their mission. They had not even asked for it.

When the fort capitulated a few days afterwards Sully blew up the five bastions, and then sent word to the Genevans to come and finish off the work. Never was an order more promptly executed: the fortress was razed to the ground in the course of one night and all the materials removed, in such a way that it was difficult to realize on the next day that ever a fort had stood there at all.†

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* Revue sav., 1884, p. 72. See also *Relation Abrégée*, chap. xxxii, p. 335.

† *Relation Abrégée*, chap. xxxii, p. 336 *et seq.* According to Zeller, it was during the siege of Fort St Catherine that Biron led the King within range of the enemy walls for the purpose of accomplishing his death. He had the day before informed the Governor of the fort of his intention, given him a description of the King, and warned the enemy that he, Biron himself,

Unfortunately, towards the end of December, 1600, M. de Sancy gave up the government of Chablais for a time to his brother Robert, Baron de Montglas, who was a zealous Calvinist. The Genevans persuaded the new Governor to seize the revenues of the benefices formerly possessed by the Knights of SS Maurice and Lazarus as property belonging to the Duke of Savoy and now become the spoils of conquest. Moreover, armed bands came out from Geneva, led by Pastor Simon Goulart, and penetrated into the newly converted country, bringing with them a number of Huguenot ministers, who proceeded to preach and exercise the functions of their religion. The Calvinists even managed to nominate as Syndics of Thonon several of their co-religionists. They especially persecuted the country of Ternier, where they ravaged the villages of Veyrier and Saint-Julien, desecrating the churches and carrying away the bells. Finally, they seized the revenues of the churches of Draillant and Armoy.

The news of these events reached Francis at Annecy, where he had been preaching a course of Advent sermons. Accompanied by Georges Rolland and bearing a letter from the Bishop of Geneva, he at once set out to find the Governor, in order to show that official the signed commands of the King of France. He had scarcely journeyed more than a league when he fell into the hands of a troop of French soldiers, who declared him to be a prisoner of war and led him into the presence of M. de Vitry, Captain of the Royal Guards. As soon as M. de Vitry learned the quality of his prisoner, however, and was made acquainted with the object of the Coadjutor's journey, he did everything in his power to remedy the mistake which had been made. Filled with veneration for the distinguished ecclesiastic's character, and charmed with the distinction of his manners, M. de Vitry immediately set him free, treated him with every courtesy, gave him a letter of recommendation for M. de Montglas, and finally offered to take him to Montmelian, to which Henry IV was then laying siege, and to present him to His Majesty. "I would accept your obliging offer with pleasure," answered the Coadjutor, "and would consider it an inestimable honour to be presented to so great a monarch: but so long as he is at war with my own sovereign, I can hardly allow myself to pay him any court. I pray God that he will speedily put the thought of peace into both their hearts." Thereupon M. de Vitry, admiring him the more for his loyalty, allowed him to resume his journey.*

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would wear a black plume. The King, however, returned in safety. Whether the Governor refused to become a party to such a crime or whether Biron repented at the last moment (as he afterwards averred) and kept the King out of range, is not known.

* C. A. de S., l. iv, p. 293; *Relation Abrégée*, chap. xxxii, p. 338 *et seq.*

Arriving at the château of Allinges, the Coadjutor handed to the Governor the letters of Mgr. de Granier and M. de Vitry, as well as the Bishop's request, confirmed and signed by Henry IV. M. de Montglas, after reading these documents, welcomed Francis with every honour, assured him that he would obey the King's instructions, which, though a Calvinist himself, he considered to be perfectly just and reasonable. He made restitution of all the ecclesiastical revenues which had been seized up till then, promised to take under his special protection all the parish priests and ecclesiastics of Chablais, and, furthermore, undertook to forbid all propaganda among the people by the ministers, who were to restrict their ministrations to the Calvinist troops of the French army.

Having accomplished this mission, Francis was obliged to hasten to the château of Sales, where his father was lying dangerously ill. M. de Boisy made a general confession of his life to his saintly son, received Holy Communion three times from his hands, and listened with eagerness to his instructions and exhortations. The old Knight was never weary of hearing Francis speak to him of God, and again and again he was heard thanking the Divine Goodness for giving him such a help at this critical moment of his life.

Learning soon after this that M. de Montglas had left the château of Allinges, Francis hurried thither in all haste and once more presented his letters to the new Governor in order to demand protection for his flock from the hands of armed Genevans. This request having been granted, the Coadjutor went through the various districts to spread the good news and to reassure the Catholics. He devoted his efforts to consoling the new converts, putting fresh hope and courage into the priests, recalling those whom fear or actual violence had already put to flight, and especially reassuring the priests of Thonon, who, occupying a more prominent position than the others, were in greater danger of persecution. Among these priests were a certain number of Jesuits. The Genevans had hoped that Henry IV would at least give orders for the expulsion of these fathers, as had been done in France by several of the Parliaments. But the King, on the contrary, took them under his special protection, and, thanks to this favour, they continued to enjoy the most perfect tranquillity.* Thanks also to the King's zeal in protecting the Church's servants, in promoting everywhere the cause of the faith, and in enforcing the strictest discipline amongst his troops, the whole country was maintained in peace, and the cause of religion suffered little or nothing from the effects of the war.

As soon as Francis had finished this round of visitations, he hastened once more to his father's bedside. It was, however, only for a short time, for he had been engaged to preach the Lenten station of the

* Hamon quotes *Vie de Claude de Granier*, p. 218.

year 1601 at Annecy. It needed a high spiritual courage on the part of both father and son to consent to a separation under such poignant circumstances, but they agreed to sacrifice their own desires to the service of God and of their fellow-men. There was a touching scene when Francis knelt by M. de Boisy's bedside to receive his father's blessing, and when the old Knight in turn begged the last benediction at the hands of the son whom he had so long honoured as his spiritual father.

The doctors had assured Francis that there was no immediate danger of death, but that his father would probably linger on until Easter, when the Provost would once more be free to visit the invalid. Unfortunately, however, they were wrong in their forecast, and M. de Boisy became so much weaker that it was thought necessary to anoint him. After this he rallied somewhat, and seemed to be improving, but at the end of a few days he once more became so ill and so manifestly nigh to death that the sacraments of the dying were again administered. It was during this crisis that the spirit of the old warrior broke out in characteristic manner. Seeing the ladies of his family waiting upon him in tears, he suddenly called to him his son Gallois, and exclaimed: "My son, you are the heir of my courage. Make all these women leave the room, lift me up, and give me my weapons. It is not right that a soldier, accustomed to brave death on the field of battle, should die in his bed in the presence of weeping women."* This moment of exaltation, however, passed away. Bringing his mind back to thoughts of religion, he picked up his crucifix, kissed it several times with every sign of love, and, lifting his eyes to heaven, sought union with God in prayer. When he felt that the approach of death was imminent, he summoned to him those of his children who were then at Sales, gave to each of them a few words of counsel, urged them to honour the Coadjutor of Geneva as their father and to obey him in all things, commanded them to console their mother by their respect, love, and obedience, and finally gave them his blessing. He gave up his soul to God on April 5, 1601.

A messenger was immediately despatched to Annecy with the news. He arrived at the church, in which Francis was preaching, just as the latter was leaving the sacristy, to go up into the pulpit. Without preamble of any sort he immediately informed the Coadjutor of M. de Boisy's death. Francis, having placed full confidence in the doctors' forecast and being utterly unprepared for this blow, was shocked and grieved to the very depths of his heart. He had wished so much to see his father once more. Nevertheless, holding command over himself, he made an act of resignation to the will of God, and then went on his way to the pulpit. He preached as though nothing unusual had happened to him. Although the subject—the death and resurrection of Lazarus—was one which again and again must have reminded him of his own grief, there was no outward revelation of its existence. It was not until he had finished his sermon that he communicated to the congregation the news of his father's death. "Gentlemen," he said, "as I was coming to the pulpit, I was informed of the death of him to whom I owe the most in this world. My father, your friend, is no more. As you were kind enough to bear him in your love, I beg of you to pray for the repose of his soul, and I ask you to excuse me if I go away for a few days in order that I may render him the last offices of my homage and duty." It was not till then that his voice faltered, and that he was overcome by the depth of his sorrow. That sorrow found an echo in the hearts of his hearers, for there were many in the audience to whom M. de Boisy had endeared himself by acts of charity, kindness, and courtesy. Francis, who had already said his own Mass, asked that two others should be celebrated for the repose of his father's soul, and at these he devoutly assisted before leaving the church for the performance of the many duties which now awaited him.*

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* Pérennès quotes *La Mémoire de Darie*, by Camus, and MS. memoirs by De Baudry, p. 5.

Immediately afterwards he set out for the château of Sales, taking with him the Dominicans of Annecy, who, by virtue of an agreement made between their community and the family, were bound to assist at the funerals of the heads of the house, and to take with them their cross, their vestments, and other things necessary for the Requiem and burial service. As soon as the Coadjutor arrived at Sales, he made his way into the death-room, and there, flinging himself upon the dead body of his father, gave himself up to his grief and to his bitter sense of loss. After remaining in the room for a long time, praying fervently for the peace of his father's soul, he then devoted himself to making the necessary arrangements for the funeral. On the day appointed, the body was carried with the most reverent ceremonial to the church at Thorens, accompanied by the family and an enormous crowd of people of every rank from the whole countryside. When the offices for the dead were finished, the body was consigned to a tomb in the Sales chapel, whence, later on, it was moved to the church of the Dominicans at Annecy.

On his return to the château of Sales, Francis devoted himself to consoling the family for the loss which they had sustained, turning their minds particularly to the thoughts which their religion presented to them in such times of sorrow. He then heard the confessions of his mother, of his brothers and sisters and of all the servants, in preparation for a general Communion, which he administered to them next morning during the course of a Mass offered up for the dead. He also preached to them a short sermon, exhorting them to sanctify their sorrow, especially urging them for this purpose to do in the spirit of holiness what they were obliged to do by the force of necessity. This duty fulfilled, he set out once more for Annecy in order to continue the work of his Lenten station in that city. He not only completed his course of Lenten sermons, but also preached on the succeeding Sundays after Easter. It was on one of these occasions, when he had been speaking with the most ardent zeal of our duty of adoring God and of loving him above all things, that God himself testified to the truth of his servants' words by working a miracle. Francis was suddenly surrounded by an aura of light so dazzling that his audience could scarcely gaze upon him. François Favre gave testimony to this miracle on oath, as one who was present, and asserted that it was seen by all those in the church. The efficacy of the Saint's preaching, supported thus by the visible sanction of God, was evidenced by the practical results that ensued; sinners pressed around his confessional, enemies became reconciled, those who had been guilty of wrongs against their neighbour offered open satisfaction, and for the time the whole town became, according to the testimony of a historian, more like a religious community than an ordinary city.*

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* C. A. de S., l. v, p. 305. *Année*, Avril 6. Other references are given by Pérennès from De Maupas, p. 164, and the MS. of De Baudry.

Whilst these things were happening, the war had been dragging on to an inglorious end. Having eventually lost the Fort St Catherine, Charbonnières, and Montmélian, the Duke found himself obliged to capitulate, and sought peace through the mediation of Cardinal Aldobrandino, the papal Legate, who had remained in Savoy in the entourage of the French King. Conferences were held first of all at Chambéry and then at Lyons, whither Henry had gone to meet his future wife, Catherine de Medicis. Thanks to the intervention of the Pope and the diplomatic skill of the Legate, conditions of peace were signed at Lyons on January 17, 1601, and ratified on March 16, by Charles Emmanuel, who, nevertheless, afterwards showed his displeasure at the terms by his conduct towards his plenipotentiaries, René de Lucinges and Arconnal. Those terms, however, were by no means as bad as they might have been. On the one side, the King of France gave up his claim to the Marquisate of Saluzzo: on the other, the Duke surrendered the country of Bresse, Bugey, Valromey, and the bailiwick of Gex, with seven villages along the Rhône. The Duke was also to pay to France an indemnity of a hundred thousand crowns.†

When the French army had evacuated Savoy towards the end of April, Francis hastened to return to his beloved converts. He went, first of all, to Allinges, to see Colonel de Brotty, who had been appointed Governor; the latter gave him a company of soldiers, whose commission it was to drive out of the parishes of Draillant and Armoy the envoys of Geneva and the minister installed by them in that district. The Coadjutor passed the season of Pentecost amongst his people in Thonon, and was delighted at the numbers who came to the altar for communion on the feast day. Then, on the Wednesday of the same week, June 13, 1601, he made his way to the bailiwick of Gaillard.

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* C. A. de S., l. v, p. 305.

† See *Histoire du Président Favre*, by Mugnier, chap. xii, p. 247.

This district, including some seven or eight parishes, situated close to the city of Geneva, had not been given back to the Duke of Savoy, after the treaty of Vervins, but had been retained by the Genevans in the name of France until the end of the difficulties anent the marquisate of Saluzzo. But the treaty of Lyons, on January 17, had stipulated that it should be surrendered to the Duke on the cession to France of Bresse and Bugey: and consequently Captain Vitto di Basterga, a good Catholic and an able soldier, had been sent by the Governor of Savoy to take possession thereof. As soon as he arrived, he informed the Genevan ministers that their presence was no longer desired in the country, inasmuch as the exercise of the Calvinist religion was not to be tolerated within its borders. The ministers, thrown into consternation by this injunction, strove to gain the powers of heaven upon their side as they had been abandoned by the powers of earth; they straightway commanded the observance of a fast, as in times of public calamity, and for several days forbade the holding of banquets or games and the wearing of flowers, jewellery, and similar ungodly gauds. They also strove to elude the prohibition that had been communicated to them, and tried to continue the holding of their services in several of the parishes: but the Captain, who seems to have been very thorough in his methods, assured them that any disobedience to his orders would entail the sacrifice of their lives. Failing to intimidate him, they next essayed to bribe him, but not even by the promise of a considerable sum of money could they manage to move him from his original attitude. The result of these things was the abrupt cessation of practically all exercise of the Protestant religion in the district. The captain, not content with thus clearing the ground, continued his task with something more positive. Awaiting the arrival of missionaries, he instructed his soldiers to speak to the people about the Catholic faith, and these men, obedient to the orders of their chief, constituted themselves for the time being as informal but quite effective preachers. Eventually Di Basterga obtained the help of two Jesuit fathers and two secular priests, who set to work with all the zeal that the circumstances and the need of the people demanded.

In order to hinder the poor folk from attending the Catholic sermons, the ministers spread the report that the priests preached in

Latin, and as to the confessional, it was luridly described as a school for crime. In spite of these ridiculous calumnies, however, the people came to the Catholic services, listened eagerly to the instructions, and abjured their errors. So great was the number of those who sought the benefits of the Sacrament of Penance, that the supply of confessors was found to be hopelessly inadequate. The conversion of the bailiwicks of Thonon and Ternier had already disposed these people towards Catholicism by the force of example, and they were all the more easily brought back to the faith because, though they had been under the influence of Calvinism for more than sixty years, they had never quite lost their affection for the old religion, and had continued to preserve a number of its practices, such as the sign of the Cross, prayers for the dead, the rosary, and the observance of many of the days of fasting and abstinence as kept in the Church. And so, as soon as the mission began, there was an extraordinary restoration of the outward symbols of Catholicity, crosses, banners, statues, and objects of piety being brought forth from the hiding-places in which they had been concealed. All the good people wanted rosaries, and when the first supply ran out, Basterga found himself forced to give away the beads which he himself usually carried around his neck. The old folk especially were rejoiced to return to the faith of their fathers, and the new converts displayed a particular love for Holy Communion, going to considerable sacrifices and even risking danger in order to obtain it. At one place a Protestant minister had stationed a troop of soldiers at the door of a church, in order to prevent the people from entering. Nevertheless, in spite of this, a Catholic woman, anxious to go to Communion, forced her way into the midst of the soldiers, and succeeded in gaining entrance to the church.*

Leaving it to the first missionaries to finish the work thus begun, Francis retired to Sales for a short time in order to take a little rest and to enjoy the company of his friend President Favre, who was expected to arrive at the château. When this short vacation was ended he went to Chambéry, to deal with several important matters, amongst which were the coadjutorship of the diocese and the revival of religion in the country of Gex. This district had been taken over from Geneva by Baron de Lux, the Governor of Burgundy, in the name of the King of France: nevertheless, it was the evident intention of the Republic to keep in its possession the ecclesiastical property of the country which had fallen into their hands. Mgr. de Granier, on the other hand, immediately set in motion all the diplomatic influence at his command to obtain its restitution.

While waiting for the issue of this affair, the Bishop, accompanied by Francis and several other officials, went to Chablais, in order to arrange for the organization of the parishes. This was in September, 1601. By papal authority he abrogated the grant of those benefices which had been surrendered to the Knights of SS Maurice and Lazarus by Gregory XIII, declaring that the Knights could never again lay claim to this property, and imposing silence upon them by order of the Holy Father. The grant had been made for a time by the Pope: the Pope now revoked it. With the aid of the resources thus obtained the Bishop re-established thirty-six parish churches, twenty-six in Chablais and ten in the district of Ternier. In determining these parishes, he selected the places which were in the greatest need of pastoral ministration, making his judgement with the help of the information afforded by the registers of episcopal visitations and by the knowledge of the priests of the country. This arrangement, however, was very far from satisfying every need: there were many other parishes which called for the ministrations of a pastor. But as these had no presbyteries, and as the funds available for the upkeep of the clergy were already exhausted, the Bishop had to satisfy himself with annexing them to one or other of the newly formed parishes, until it was possible to give them an independent existence of their own. In order to satisfy the people as far as possible, certain parochial privileges were granted to these annexed districts, such as the administration of the sacraments, the reservation somewhere in each annexe of the Blessed Sacrament and of the Holy Oils for the sick, and permission to have their own baptismal fonts and burial grounds. To the parish priests of churches having such districts attached to them curates were sent, in order to make the working of this system possible. In this case, it was agreed that a low Mass should be said every Sunday and great feast-day in the church of the annexed district: if there were several of such districts each would be served in turn in much the same way that prevails in many places in England and Scotland at the present time. High Mass, or probably a *Missa Cantata*, was always to be celebrated every Sunday at the principal church of the parish, and a low Mass every day of the week. In addition to this, the different parishes were grouped into a system of deaneries, so that the priests of each group should entertain close relations with each other, should help each other in various ways, and should assemble together on the patronal and dedication feasts of the churches of their deanery. Finally, a division was made of the revenues from the newly acquired benefices and from certain tithes possessed hitherto by various abbeys and priories. These houses were granted limited rights of patronage over certain of the parishes: they were allowed to present for the *concursus*, prescribed by the Council of Trent, priests whom they considered suitable for any vacancy in these particular churches.

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* Hamon refers to *Vie de Claude de Granier*, p. 222. See also *Relation Abrégée*, chap. xxxiii.

Everything being thus organized, it only remained to appoint pastors to each of the new parishes; this was done by the Bishop in consultation with his Coadjutor, an arrangement which ensured that those chosen for the various districts should be the best qualified for the purpose. Thus was finished the missionary work which had been undertaken by Francis under such unfavourable auspices and which had been carried through in the face of such tremendous difficulties. In the main, the conversion of Chablais was undoubtedly due to his personal labours, but there are three other names which should always be associated with his in this great achievement: these are Father Chérubin of Maurienne and Father Esprit of Beaume, the two saintly and zealous Capuchins, and last, but by no means least, that of the Provost's own cousin, Canon Louis de Sales.

About this time Francis received a further consolation in the conversion of a relative of Beza's, Etienne de la Faverge. This nobleman, while staying at Geneva, had gone into Chablais out of curiosity and had listened to one of the Provost's sermons. This had been followed by interviews, not only with Francis, but with Father Chérubin and Father Esprit, without, however, any definite visible result at first. During the year 1600, acting on the advice of Beza himself, De la Faverge had gone to Rome to see the ceremonies of the Jubilee. On his way adventures befell him. Robbed by his travelling companion, worn out by weariness, he fell ill of a fever, and, on gaining Rome, was obliged to seek admission into a hospital. The doctor, on seeing his serious condition and thinking naturally that he was a Catholic, declared it necessary that he should see a priest—insisted so strongly on this, in fact, as to make it a condition for his own attendance on the sick man. De la Faverge sent word to the convent of the Capuchins, asking if the community had in their midst any father from Savoy, and, if so, begging that religious to come to his aid. Happily Father Chérubin had just arrived in the eternal city. The good father had recently been suffering from the results of a dastardly attack upon him on the part of some Calvinists. With the idea, it is said, of driving him into insanity, they had poured vitriol or some such strong acid upon his head. He had made a vow that, if he recovered from this attack without permanent injury, he would go in pilgrimage to Loretto. Having been completely cured, he had fulfilled his vow and had then come on to Rome. He now hastened to visit Etienne de la Faverge, and had little difficulty in persuading him to abjure his heresy. The new convert, on recovering his health, was not satisfied with entering the Church as a layman: he was eventually received into the Order of Discalced Carmelites, was elected by his brethren to the most responsible offices, and led a life of the greatest sanctity and edification.

Now that the Catholic religion was firmly established in Chablais, so far as the great majority of the people were concerned, the Provost once more turned his attention to the few who persisted in remaining Calvinists. Both he and the Jesuit fathers used all their eloquence to persuade these people of their error: some they seem to have been able to convince or, at any rate, to persuade to a certain extent, but a remnant remained unshakable. Consequently, the Provost suggested to the Duke of Savoy that a decree of banishment should be issued against these men, with permission, however, to sell their property before quitting the country. "By this means," he naïvely remarks, "several will avoid being banished from Paradise, in order not to incur banishment from their country: the others, who will be very few in number, are of such quality that Your Highness will gain greatly by losing them—people whose loyalty is already perverted and who follow Huguenotism more as a matter of politics than of religion."*

A few days after having suggested this threat of banishment—which, by the way, seems never to have been put into execution—the Provost went to Lyons, called thither by Baron de Lux. Henry IV and his counsellors seemed quite willing to surrender to the Bishop the ecclesiastical property of the country of Gex. They desired, however, to have such an excuse for doing this as would exonerate them in the eyes of the Genevans and of those Protestant Powers who were supporting the Swiss Republic. Such an excuse would be found in pressure brought to bear upon the French Court by the Pope. From Lyons, therefore, the Provost wrote letters to Cardinal Aldobrandino and others, begging them to obtain the necessary papal intervention. Meanwhile, as a beginning, the French King authorized the re-establishment of the Catholic religion in three parishes—those of Gex, Farge, and Asserens. Accordingly, in the month of November, the Bishop and his Coadjutor went to Gex, taking with them Canons Louis de Sales, Claude Grandis, and Antoine Bochut, whose zeal was soon successful in obtaining important results.

In connection with this visit to Gex, we find an interesting postscript to a letter written later on January 3, 1602, to Claude de Quoex, concerning the famous Huguenot, François de Bonne, Duke of Lesdiguières. The Provost remarks: "Monsieur Lesdiguières happened to be at Gex on the day when we were there. To him the ministers had recourse. He told them there was no remedy, that the King willed it so, but [advised] that they should keep the Church property as long as they could, for that would maintain their religion in spite of the exercise of ours."† Looking at the uncompromising Protestantism of this advice, it would have been difficult to foresee what afterwards happened to the famous soldier when he came into personal relations with Francis de Sales.

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* E.N., Tom. XII, Lettre CXLIV, p. 77.

† *Ibid.*, Lettre CLI, p. 98.

From Gex the two prelates went to the bailiwick of Gaillard, where the Bishop, about the middle of the month of December (1601) reconciled the eight parish churches which were still left standing after the storms of the Reformation.

In spite of these successes, the Bishop and his lieutenant were not yet satisfied. Their zealous perseverance was still directed towards the full re-establishment of the Catholic religion in the country of Gex. As in the former case of Chablais, so here also the great hindrance was the complete lack of means. It was absolutely needful to obtain from the King of France the surrender of the ancient Church property. But the more they strove for this object, the more difficult it seemed to become. Henry was deeply indebted to the Genevans by his former political relations with them, and the Genevans, supported bythe Canton of Berne and by Queen Elizabeth of England, were moving heaven and earth to keep the ancient benefices in their hands, not merely for the sake of their value, but in order to hinder in every way possible the return of Catholicism to the country.

CHAPTER XIV*

(1602)

Francis sets out for Paris—Dangerous crossing of the Saône—Arrival at Dijon—Reaches Paris—Negotiations with Villeroi—Statement of claims—Francis preaches Lenten station in the Royal Chapel—Panegyric of the Duke of Mercœur in Notre Dame—Acquaintance with B. Marie de l'Incarnation—Francis is accused of being an accomplice of Biron—The King refuses credence to the story—The King's admiration for the Saint—Francis and M. de Bérulle—The Saint as director of souls—He prepares to leave Paris

THE country of Gex, as we have seen, had been recently ceded by the Duke of Savoy to the King of France. It formed part of the diocese of the Bishop of Geneva, and consisted of about twenty-six parishes, which also included four priories. During its occupation by the Genevans the exercise of the Catholic religion had been prohibited within its limits, all ecclesiastical property had been seized by the Calvinists, and the Catholic clergy expelled. So long as the country had nominally belonged to the Duke of Savoy, the Genevans had found themselves sufficiently strong to keep a firm grip upon it: but now that it had passed into the hands of France, an altogether new state of affairs had arisen. The Bishop of Geneva had promptly asked the King of France to re-establish the Catholic religion in his newly-acquired province, and demanded that by virtue of the *Interim* all ecclesiastical property should be restored to the clergy. The Genevans on their side protested against these demands, both as regards the re-establishment of the Catholic religion and the restoration of property: and in order to support their claims they sent ambassadors to Paris.

On receiving news of this move, Claude de Granier suggested to his Coadjutor that the latter should go to Paris to oppose on the spot the diplomatic proceedings of the Genevan envoys, and Francis immediately accepted the mission. He left Annecy on January 2, 1602, accompanied by Antoine Favre, René, the President's son, Canon Rogés, Georges Rolland, and a servant. It had been suggested by his friends that, before departing for Paris, he should receive his episcopal consecration, in order that the dignity of his office should give him a greater influence in carrying out the task entrusted to him. Apart from the fact that his bulls had not yet arrived from Rome,

* Hamon, l. iv, chap. iii.

Francis was utterly opposed to the suggestion. "So long as God shall leave our Bishop with us," he said, "I will change neither my rank in the Church nor the colour of my clothes."*

The Provost and his companions had decided to make their journey by Burgundy in order to discuss their affairs with Baron de Lux, who resided at Dijon, holding command there in the King's name. When they arrived at Macon, where they had to cross the Saône, they learnt that the river, swollen by recent rains, was in such a turbulent state as to make its crossing in the small ferry-boat a matter of danger. Francis, however, persuaded the boatmen to make the attempt. When they arrived in the middle of the river, they found the water, beaten up by the wind against the current, so rough that their frail bark was in danger of being swamped. Both boatmen and passengers lost courage, and made certain that their end was come. Francis alone retained his serenity: praying with his usual calm and recollection, he confidently commended the safety of his little party to the care of God and then reassured his companions, telling them that they would certainly reach their destination in safety. As he was speaking to them, the violence of the flood seemed to diminish, the boat, struggling hitherto and half-submerged, seemed to lighten, and by dint of persevering efforts the boatmen brought their charges safely to shore. All were convinced that they owed their safety to the prayers of the Provost, and they turned to thank him: but the moment they began to express their gratitude he put them off, turning their minds to the value of placing full confidence in the protection of Almighty God, and telling them many wonderful things about the working of Divine Providence.†

When the party arrived at Dijon, they received the warmest welcome from the chief people of the country. A number of the counsellors of the Parliament called upon them, and Baron de Lux insisted that the Coadjutor and his friends should stay at his house so long as they remained in the city. This proved most fortunate, as it enabled Francis to discuss the object of his journey at full length with his host, and to enlist on his side the latter's sympathy and help. The Baron listened to him with the keenest interest, and finally gave him letters of recommendation for several influential people at the Court and also for the King himself. Provided with these documents, Francis resumed his journey on January 14: he reached Paris on the 22nd, and found lodgings for himself in the rue Saint-Jacques.

His first visit was to the papal Nuncio, to whom he at once explained the object of his visit to the capital and whose help and protection he solicited. The Nuncio immediately promised his full support and, as a beginning, conducted Francis to the presence of the King's minister, Villeroi, and introduced him to that statesman. After presenting his letters of recommendation, both from his own bishop and from M. de Lux, Francis explained the object of his mission, made his petition, and stated the reasons on which it was based. Villeroi showed himself by no means favourable to the Bishop of Geneva's request, and proceeded to demonstrate the objections which lay in the way of its being granted. However, he promised to give the matter every consideration, and asked the Coadjutor to supply him with a detailed memorandum of the claims put forward by Mgr. de Granier, and of the arguments upon which the justice of those claims was supposed to rest.* Francis set to work at once, and a few days later had completed his petition and sent it to the minister. He reduced all his demands to two points, put forward the third article of the Edict of Nantes as the justification of his request, and suggested that he was asking for no more but that the law holding good throughout France should be applied to the country of Gex, as forming part of the French dominion. He petitioned, therefore, first of all for the free exercise of the Catholic religion in all those places of the district in which it had been freely practised before the religious wars. "Against which," he urged, "there could be no reason to complain, since it would be treating this bailiwick like all the other subjects of the kingdom, leaving it the same liberty. It is not reasonable that the so-called Reformers of this district should receive any greater consideration than the others, and that this one corner of the kingdom should be excepted from the general rule of the Edict: the more so that all treaties, hitherto made in any other sense, had been broken by the war." He urged that the Genevans themselves had, by their conduct, revoked all such agreements. For, a few years ago, in a treaty concluded at Nyon between His Highness, Charles Emmanuel, and the Bernese, it was expressly stipulated that the Catholic religion should be fully exercised throughout the whole of that bailiwick, and that the reformed worship should only be permitted in three of his villages. Yet, since then, the Genevans had taken away this liberty from the Catholics, and so had made this and other treaties null and void.

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* *Année de S. F. de S.*, Jan. 3.

† C. A. de S., l. v, p. 310.

The second demand was that the ecclesiastical property, which had been seized by the Calvinists during the religious troubles, should be restored to the Church. It was realized that certain exceptions would have to be made, such as property of which Geneva had taken possession by right of sovereignty, and which the Bishop did not claim, since it was not under the King's dominion. Moreover, with regard to property which the Bernese had already sold to others, a claim was only made with the understanding that the people who had bought such property should be indemnified on restoring it. With these exceptions there could be no reasonable objections to the desired restoration. There was no chance of its becoming a cause of revolt, because, since the nobility were practically all Catholic, there would be no one to lead such a movement; besides which there were no fortresses or strong places to which any would-be rebels could retire. What did it matter if the Bernese and Genevans happened to take offence? Was it to be said that His Majesty the King of France was under any obligation to force his people to live according to the ideas of foreigners? Or were people to think that the King was afraid of the Swiss, who, when the Duke of Savoy on a like occasion restored the faith in his countries of Chablais, Ternier, and Gaillard, did not venture to make the slightest movement, or any semblance thereof?*

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* *Ibid.*, p. 311.

To this memorandum Villeroi answered that each of the two points of the request necessitated much consideration; that, while he desired very much to second the pious desires of the Bishop of Geneva, it was also necessary to avoid bringing the King's government into odium, and that, after carefully considering everything, he would make a full and unprejudiced report of the matter to His Majesty, with whom rested the final decision.† Francis was constrained, therefore, to possess his soul in patience. Patience, however, was quite compatible with active perseverance. In order to prove still more fully the justice of his cause, and to keep it well in mind, he wrote no less than four other memoranda, similar to the first. President Favre also came to the Provost's aid as an auxiliary, and afforded his friend all the help which his credit, both in the city and at the Court, was capable of exercising. In spite of all this pressure, Villeroi was still disinclined to give in, and so long as the Coadjutor was unable to persuade the minister, there was little chance of success. For Henry IV placed unbounded confidence in this statesman, who was also well supported by public opinion. The settlement of the question was still further delayed by the departure of the King from Paris to Fontainebleau, where he was to pass a considerable part of the year. Francis was, therefore, obliged to resign himself to a prolonged stay in Paris. He was not, however, given any chance of remaining inactive, even when not occupied with his diplomatic work, but was soon busily engaged in preaching and in the direction of souls.

During his first days at Paris Francis had hastened to call on Princess Marie of Luxemburg, Duchess of Mercœur, with whose family the De Sales had had long-standing and hereditary relations. This princess, touched by his remembrance, and immediately captivated by the charm of his bearing, had not only supported him with all her influence in aid of his diplomatic work, but was never tired of praising him to her acquaintances. In all her conversations she spoke of the Coadjutor of Geneva as the example of everything that a prelate should be; "Never," she would say, "has there been seen united in one man so much virtue and talent." About this time it happened that the priest who had been engaged to preach the Lenten station at the Court was unable for some reason or other to fulfil his appointment. Thereupon the Duchess of Longueville, to whom the Queen had assigned the duty of selecting the Court preacher for this occasion, came to the conclusion that she could do no better than offer the task to the prelate of whom the Duchess of Mercœur had spoken so highly. Accordingly, she invited Francis to preach the Lenten station in the Royal Chapel—an invitation he thought well to accept.*

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* Opuscules (Blaise, 1821), p. 175.

† Pérennès (l. v, chap. iv) quotes De Cambis, Tom. I, pp. 282, 283.

He began his course of sermons on Ash Wednesday, February 25,† and in a very short time the chapel was found to be too small for the number of people who wished to hear him. Not only did the princes and the gentlemen and ladies of the Court crowd around his pulpit, but a large number of ecclesiastics and members of the Sorbonne University also came to hear the discourses of this preacher from Savoy. Nor did they find their expectations disappointed: for in these sermons was contained everything that was needed by the various elements of the audience—profound learning, sympathy of understanding, natural eloquence, a vigorous yet dignified delivery, and, above all, an intense earnestness and personal sanctity.

On March 28 Favre wrote from Paris to Mgr. de Granier. After describing the difficulties of the negotiations entrusted to the Coadjutor, and mentioning the "prudence and skill" with which the latter was dealing with them, he says: "Meanwhile, my brother"—the President's usual name for Francis—"in the midst of so many anxieties continues to arouse admiration by the learned and excellent sermons which he preaches on certain days of the week in several of the most highly honoured places in the town. This is a thing which wins great influence both for himself and his mission not only amongst all good Catholics, but also amongst the princes and princesses, who attend practically all his sermons."‡

There was at this time in Paris a Calvinist lady named Mme. de Racconis de Perdrauville, who possessed a certain reputation for learning. Several well-known Catholic controversialists had attempted from time to time to convince her of the errors of Protestantism, but had failed. This lady was drawn by curiosity to attend a sermon preached by the Provost in the Royal Chapel on the first Monday of Lent. This sermon was not of a controversial nature, but dealt with the Gospel of the day, in which is given our Lord's parable of the Last Judgement. Such was the power of the preacher, however, that the lady afterwards felt impelled to seek an interview with him, and to learn from him what he considered to be the faults of the Protestant doctrine. This first interview led to several others, and the final result was not only the conversion of Mme. de Racconis herself, but that of all the members of her family. Of this incident the Saint afterwards wrote: "Since then I have always thought that he who preaches with love preaches quite sufficiently against heretics, although he should not utter a single word of controversy against them."* In connection with the Saint's power of conversion, Charles Auguste de Sales relates a story of the famous controversialist, Du Perron, Bishop of Evreux. Some Catholic gentlemen had introduced a number of Huguenots to the Bishop, in order that he should persuade them to abjure their errors. "What do you want me to do?" he said. "Do you want me to dispute with these heretics? Truly, if you wish me to convince them, I hope that, with the aid of God, the doctrine which he has given me will easily accomplish that: but if you want to convert them, take them to the Coadjutor of Geneva, to whom God has granted this virtue that all those to whom he speaks return home converted." The same prelate, speaking to Henry IV about the conversion of the family of Mme. de Racconis, remarked: "Sire, I nearly threw all my books of controversy into the fire when I learnt that those gentlemen of the Racconis family, about whose conversion I had taken so much trouble, had abjured their heresy at the hands of M. de Sales, the Bishop of Geneva."†

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* C. A. de S., l. v, p. 314.

† Pérennès gives Feb. 20.

‡ Histoire et Correspondance du Président Favre, Lettre XCV.

When the Coadjutor had finished his Lenten station, the Duchess of Longueville sent him as a fee a magnificent purse, filled with gold, commissioning the bearer, one of the gentlemen of her household, to convey to Francis a very flattering message of congratulation. On receipt of this message the Provost was filled with confusion. "The Princess," he replied, "did me a greater honour than I deserved when she asked me to preach the Lenten station, and on that head I do not know how to thank her fittingly for the kindness that I owe her. She will always find me ready to obey her, even in far more difficult matters. I am only sorry not to have corresponded better with what was demanded by the dignity of my audience and of the pulpit I occupied. That, however, must not be attributed either to want of appreciation or of diligence, but simply to the limitations of my mind and the ruggedness of my speech. For the rest, sir, I give freely what God has freely bestowed upon me, and ask no other reward but that which is prepared in heaven for those who work in the Lord's vineyard. For this reason I beg you to return this gold to Her Highness. Nevertheless, I thank her very humbly."‡

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* C. A. de S., l. v, p. 314; I have failed to find the passage quoted.

† *Ibid.*, p. 318.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 315.

This action, far from giving offence, only increased the Princess's respect for the Coadjutor and augmented the consideration of all those who came in connection with him. His manifest sincerity, the sanctity of his life, and his habit of plain speaking, where such was necessary, eliminated all possible suspicion of pose in his conduct and language. As to his preaching, there were no two opinions about it. "The Coadjutor of Geneva," said a counsellor of the Parliament, who had been a constant attendant at his sermons, "has done me a lot of good, but at the same time he has done me one harm from which I shall never recover: he has made me discontented with all other preachers."*

In the meanwhile, Henry IV, who had passed the whole of Lent at Fontainebleau, had heard something of Francis's reputation as a preacher, and had become anxious to hear him. Consequently he invited the Coadjutor to preach in the chapel of the royal château, an invitation which for many reasons could scarcely be refused. Francis, therefore, left Paris for Fontainebleau on April 9. On the next day President Favre, who remained in the capital, wrote to Mgr. de Granier, "I feel myself obliged by a twofold duty, in the absence of my brother the Provost, to inform you as to his health, and to tell you that he went yesterday to see the King at Fontainebleau, in the hopes of obtaining some sort of favourable decision from His Majesty, before the latter sets out for Blois, whither it is believed he is soon going. You could not believe, nor could I tell you, what favour is shown to my brother by the princes and princesses of the Court for the merit which they recognize in him, and for the reputation acquired by the many learned and excellent sermons which he has preached in the best-known pulpits of this town during the seasons of Lent and Easter. In fine, he is considered to be the best preacher whom France has seen for a long time upon this great stage, and several are of opinion that the King will not let him return hither without commanding him to preach in his presence. I hope that this will be so—as do also several others—with the conviction that it would greatly increase his credit in the matter of his diplomatic mission. . . ."†

Francis preached before the King on Low Sunday, April 14. After hearing this sermon, Henry IV remarked to several of the members of his Court: "Those who told me that this Savoyard was a great man were not wrong. I have never heard a more powerful preacher. In truth, he is worthy of a greater position than that which he now fills." The consequence was that the King had several interviews in private with the Coadjutor and conversed with the latter freely. He was afterwards heard to say: "The Coadjutor of Geneva is the phœnix of prelates. For amongst all our dignitaries, or, at any rate, amongst most of them, if they are of noble birth, they are ignorant; if they are learned, they are not as pious as they should be; there is always something wanting. But M. de Sales, Bishop-elect of Geneva, is of good blood, is learned, and is devout."*

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* Hamon quotes De Cambis, Tom. I, p. 341.

† Correspondance du Président Favre, Lettre XCVI.

Francis, on his return to Paris, continued his negotiations as to the religious affairs of Gex with renewed confidence, inspired by the kindness and favour of the French monarch. But he was soon to discover that in these diplomatic matters the goodwill of the Prince is not sufficient, and that his ministers, and sometimes even people of very inferior position, are more powerful than the sovereign. He learned that all his claims had been attacked by the deputies of Geneva in a memorandum which they had presented to the State council. In this document they protested particularly against the restitution of Church property, contending that the Republic of Geneva had held it in peaceful possession since the year 1536, and that, moreover, their right to it had been guaranteed at least implicitly by the treaty between the Bernese and the Duke of Savoy at the time of the surrender of the bailiwicks. They furthermore put forward in their favour the treaty of Soleure, by which the French King had engaged himself to take Geneva and its territory under his protection. On considering these arguments, the Council came to the conclusion that it needed more time for reflection, and delayed indefinitely the solution of the question. The Coadjutor was thus obliged to prolong his stay in Paris, in order to refute the arguments of his adversaries and to prove the justice of his claims on behalf of his religion.

About this time there came to Paris the news of the death of Philip Emmanuel of Lorraine, Duke of Mercœur and of Penthièvre, Prince of Martigues and of the Holy Roman Empire. The year before, 1601, this great French soldier had been invited by the Emperor Rudolf II of Hungary to command his armies in the war against the Turks. With 15,000 men he had attacked Ibrahim, who commanded an army four times as strong, and, forced to retire for want of ammunition and provisions, had effected a masterly retreat. The next year, however, with 13,000 men he returned to the attack, defeated a Turkish army of 150,000 men, and retook Alba Reale, in the Hungarian diocese of Stuhlweissenberg. Worn out by the fatigue and anxiety of these campaigns, he was returning to France in order to rest, when he was taken ill of a malignant fever at Nuremburg, where he died on February 19, 1602. On hearing the news, the Duchess of Mercœur was completely overwhelmed, and, in the excess of her grief, rejected all attempts on the part of those who wished to console her. Francis, however, managed to gain admission into her presence, and succeeded in driving away her despair, gently bringing back her mind and will into a state of resignation to the decrees of Providence. Already her husband's body had been borne to the city of Nancy and there laid to rest in the Franciscan church: but she decided to have a Requiem celebrated at the church of Notre Dame in Paris with all possible solemnity, so that she and all those who had loved and respected her husband might have the opportunity of paying to his memory a last public act of homage. She invited the Coadjutor of Geneva to pronounce the funeral panegyric. The task thus offered to him was a difficult matter under existing circumstances. The Duke of Mercœur had been one of the principal chiefs of the League which had waged war not only against the Huguenots, but against Henry III as being suspected of leanings towards the Protestant party. He had been the first to take up arms against the unhappy Valois, and, after the assassination of that prince, had been the last to make peace with Henry IV.

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* C. A. de S., l. v, p. 317.

Nevertheless, Francis found reason for accepting the invitation to preach on this occasion. "For," as he afterwards wrote in the preface of the *Treatise on the Love of God*, "as my father, grandfather, and great-grandfather had been brought up as pages in the house of the most illustrious and excellent princes of Martigues, his fathers and predecessors, the Duchess looked upon me as the hereditary servant of her house." He pronounced the Duke's funeral panegyric, therefore, on April 27, in the church of Notre Dame before a large audience of distinguished people, including several cardinals and prelates, a great number of princes and princesses, of marshals of France, of the Knights of the Holy Ghost, and of all the members of the French Parliament. He avoided the difficulty of the political question by omitting any allusion to that part of the Duke's life which was contemporary with the religious and civil wars. Seeking mainly the edification of his audience, he turned their attention, first of all, to the personal nobility and piety of the dead man, who had always striven to sanctify each day of his life by attendance at Mass, by the recitation of the Rosary and the Office of our Lady, and by an examination of his conscience at morn and eve. He related how, on all the great feasts of the Church, the Duke had been accustomed to receive the Sacraments of Penance and of the holy Eucharist, how intensely he cultivated a strong love for the Mother of Jesus Christ, how it was his delight to visit the churches and chapels dedicated to her, enriching them with his offerings, and how in his trust in her protection he would choose Saturday as the most fitting day on which to wage any important battle against the infidels of the Ottoman Empire. After relating the Duke's achievements against the Turks, and congratulating the French nation on giving such a warrior to the Christian cause, the orator passed on to the last days of his hero's life. "Not knowing where death awaited him, he was ready for it at any moment and in any place. And when at last it drew near to him, he cried out: ‘ May God, my Creator, be ever praised on earth as he is in heaven. In his great mercy he has brought me now to the end of this mortal life: his infinite goodness does not will that I should remain longer amidst so many miseries. I had vowed to him to go to his holy house of Loretto, there to honour the greatness of his Mother: but since this is not his will, I will alter the plan of my journey, in order to honour in heaven her whom I desired to know on earth.’ ” The preacher then went on to relate how the Duke had received the Blessed Sacrament as his viaticum.

The authorities of Nuremburg, being Protestants, had refused the dying man's request that he might be allowed to hear Mass: out of respect, however, for his merit and rank, they had granted his chaplain permission to bring him the Blessed Sacrament from the nearest Catholic church.* He had no sooner seen it, than, weak and feeble in body yet strong and brave in spirit, having more faith than life, he threw himself from his bed, and, bowing himself to the ground, adored his Saviour with tears, words, and gestures eloquent of love. He offered to him his soul, dedicated to him his heart, and then received him into his breast, with all the humility and fervour that his great faith commanded in this final phase of life.

The Duchess of Mercœur was so pleased with the panegyric that she desired to have it published. To this the Coadjutor consented because, as he said himself,† the sermon contained an abridgement of the heroic deeds of the prince, because the princess desired the publication, and because such a desire on her part was no other than a law for himself. At the same time, he felt that some apology was needed for those omissions which his prudence had suggested in view of the circumstances under which the panegyric was delivered. Accordingly, in a letter to the Duchess, he wrote the following: “There is reason to lament that nothing was said of the finest part of his life. But, having merely undertaken to give a simple and summary panegyric of that which was suitable for the time, the place, and the audience, I felt obliged to leave it to history to supply for my omission, realizing that history must reserve whole volumes for so fine a life.”‡

Meanwhile the Coadjutor's reputation was increasing from day to day. The churches and communities of the town and the monasteries of the surrounding country desired to hear his instructions and to receive his advice. At times, even, his counsel was sought with regard to merely temporal affairs, for the settlement of which he was found to possess considerable ability. The result of all this was that he was just as busy at Paris as he had been in Chablais, and his multiplied occupations scarcely left him time for his meals and rest. St Jane Frances relates that he preached more than a hundred times during his seven months' stay in the French capital.

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* E. N., Tom. VII, p. 430.

† Preface of the *Treatise on the Love of God.*

‡ E.N., Tom. XIII, Lettre CLVII, p. 111. For the sermon see E.N., Tom. VII, p. 430.

Amongst those who came to consult the Saint during these days was a Turk who was living in Paris, and who was attracted by what he had heard of the Coadjutor's sanctity and learning. He came to ask for enlightenment on the Church's teaching as to the Trinity, of which he had but a very confused notion. Francis explained, as far as was possible, the Catholic doctrine on this head and also instructed him on other points. When the worthy Mohammedan withdrew, he was so evidently satisfied with what he had heard, that all his friends concluded that he was not far from conversion. History, however, does not relate the sequel.*

One of the most remarkable people whom he met at this time was Mme. Acarie. This lady, the wife of M. Pierre Acarie, one of the King's counsellors, afterwards became a Carmelite nun on the death of her husband. Her name in religion was Sister Mary of the Incarnation, and she was eventually beatified by Pius VI in 1791 under that title. She took advantage of the Coadjutor's stay in Paris to seek his guidance as a confessor, and this resulted in one of the beautiful friendships of which the lives of the saints give many examples. It was from Francis that she learned a point of moral theology of which, in spite of her learning and sanctity, she had been hitherto unaware. This was that imperfections, which proceed from human weakness without the deliberate consent of the will, are not sins, and consequently cannot furnish matter for absolution. So saintly was this lady's life that, examining her conscience in the light of her newly-acquired knowledge, she was unable to find in her daily conduct any fault that bore the real characteristics of deliberate venial sin, and so, when she desired to obtain the grace of the Sacrament of Penance, was obliged to reiterate the confession of some sin of her past life.

Francis, for his own part, found the greatest profit in conversing with so wonderful a soul. It gave him an incomparable happiness to hear her speaking of God, and, as he listened to her, he felt his heart burning still more intensely with the flames of divine love. For this reason he lost no opportunity of going to her house for these saintly conferences. From Dom Jean de Saint-François, one of the Saint's biographers, we learn something more of the Coadjutor's relations with Mme. Acarie. "I asked him," he writes, "some months before he died, whether he had any particular knowledge of the graces that God bestowed upon this saintly soul, beyond those which the historians of her life have mentioned. He answered, 'No,' adding:

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* C. A. de S., l. v, p. 315.

'When I was in her presence, she inspired me with such great respect for her virtue, that I never ventured to question her as to what took place within her soul, and I never sought to learn anything of her inner life beyond what she was willing to tell me on her own initiative, without any invitation on my part. Now it is quite certain that she talked much more willingly of her faults than of the graces which she received; and I did not look upon her as my penitent but as a vessel which the Holy Ghost had consecrated to his own special use. . . . How sorry I am now that I did not acquire a deeper knowledge of the workings of the Spirit of God within her, for she would willingly have told me everything about her soul!' "*

Eighteen years afterwards Francis wrote in a letter to a Carmelite Sister: "I never think of your thrice-blessed Mother without gaining profit therefrom." And to M. de Marillac, who had sent him a portrait of the Carmelite saint, he wrote in 1621: "You could have sent me nothing more profitable or more pleasing to my soul, for, on the one hand, I have such a deeply reverential love for this saintly lady, and, on the other, so great a need to arouse often in my mind the sacred emotions which her presence and her conversation used to excite within me in days gone by."†

From these things it may be gathered that in the midst of his diplomatic and apostolic work the Coadjutor was not neglecting the affairs of his own soul. He made use of every possible incident in his search after perfection and a still closer union with God. Passing one day before a palace of remarkable architectural beauty, he stopped to examine it more closely, and instantly his habit of thought formed an analogy between the building before him and his own soul. "Would to God," he said, "that I had taken as much care in ruling my heart as the architect has employed in building this house! Everything in it is perfect: its every stone has been suitably cut and polished. And my soul—how deep should be my shame! I have not yet corrected the sharpness of its angles, or polished the ruggedness of its surface." Full of these thoughts he retired to his lodgings and inflicted upon himself a bitter discipline.‡

This preoccupation for the salvation of souls and the increase of his own sanctity rendered him insensible to all human considerations and anxieties. We have already alluded to the plots of Marshal de Biron against the King of France—plots engineered with the concurrence of the Court of Spain and the Duke of Savoy. These sordid machinations were now coming to their inevitable end, and for a time it seemed as if Francis, without any fault of his, was to be mixed up with the miserable and tragic business. On June 13, the Octave of Corpus Christi, just as the Coadjutor was about to preach in the church of St Benedict, a nobleman who was a friend of his came up to him with an air of alarm, and told him in confidence that Marshal de Biron, Baron de Lux, and several other noblemen had been arrested as accomplices of the King of Spain and the Duke of Savoy in a conspiracy against the State. By this plot the two foreign princes were to take possession of Provence, Dauphiny, Burgundy, Bresse, and several other provinces.* Francis's friend went on to say: "Someone has reported to the King that you also are one of the conspirators, that the business of the country of Gex is only a pretext for your stay in Paris, and that, as a matter of fact, you are here as an emissary of the Duke of Savoy, in order to engineer the working of the conspiracy. Your connection with Baron de Lux and the warmth with which he recommended you to his best friends lend colour to this calumny. You must take measures to ensure your safety." Francis received this alarming intelligence with the greatest calm, and not the slightest trace of anxiety was seen in his bearing. After having thanked his friend, he went up into the pulpit and preached in his usual manner, just as if nothing had occurred to trouble the serenity of his mind. The nobleman, who listened to him, was amazed, and coming to him after the sermon, said: "Well, do you mean to say that what I have told you causes you no anxiety? You are accused of the crime of treason, and you appear absolutely indifferent to the charge!" "I should be very worried indeed about it," answered the Coadjutor, "if I was guilty: and I should certainly think of making my escape had I anything on my conscience. But since I am innocent, I put my trust in God, and I am so far from feeling any fear that I am going straightway to seek audience of the King."† He immediately made his way to the Louvre, where the King had just arrived.‡ No sooner had Henry seen him, and guessed the reason of his visit, than he hastened to reassure him with every mark of kindness. "M. de Genève, there is no need for you to dream of justifying yourself, for I have never entertained any suspicion against you. But I cannot hinder people from bringing me rumours." "Sire," answered Francis, "I am not clever enough in matters of State to engage in such. But, even if I understood these things, I would not enter upon my apprenticeship therein by so dastardly an action as this, especially after all the kindness with which Your Majesty has overwhelmed me."*

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* Hamon quotes *Vie de St François de Sales*, by D. Jean de S. F., l. ii, pp. 164, 165.

† C. A. de S., l. v, p. 322; E.N., Lettre 1705 in Tom. XIX and Lettre 1776 in Tom. XX.

‡ Hamon quotes Longueterre, p. 425.

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* Such is Hamon's account. According to other historians, giving the Florentine Ambassador as their authority, the plot went much further than this. Henry IV and the Dauphin were to be assassinated during the month of June, either by poison or any other appropriate means. Biron was arrested at Fontainebleau on June 12 by our old acquaintance, M. de Vitry. The Comte d'Auvergne, another prominent conspirator, was also seized on the same day. Biron was tried and executed. The Comte d'Auvergne, thanks to the influence of his sister, Henriette d'Entragues, the King's mistress, was pardoned.

† Pérennès quotes MS. of De Baudry, 1602. See C. A. de S., l. v, p. 319.

‡ Hamon says that the King had been in Paris for the last six weeks, but, according to Zeller, he had been visiting the towns of Orleans, Blois, Tours, and Poitiers. He arrived at Fontainebleau on June 11, and had an interview with Biron on the 12th before the Marshal was arrested.

The King continued to talk with Francis for some time, and, as a result of this interview, conceived a still greater admiration for him than that which he had felt at the beginning of their acquaintance. On several occasions the King was afterwards heard to praise him, saying that the Coadjutor of Geneva was a man of God, who lived for God alone, that he was endowed with a marvellous prudence and a rare modesty, and that he made no use of flattery, but rendered to each man that which was his due. When one of the gentlemen of the court expressed his surprise that the King should so often have in his mouth the praises of this Bishop from Savoy, Henry answered: "Yes, I hold him in particular esteem, because he unites within himself every kind of virtue and has not one single failing. I have never known anyone more likely to restore to the ecclesiastical state its ancient splendour. He is gentle, affable, humble of heart, always in complete command of himself. He is full of piety, without affectation or scrupulosity. In a word, he is the fittest of all men to drive out heresy and to re-establish the Catholic religion on a solid and enduring basis."†

One day, having remarked the friendship which existed between Francis and his secretary, M. Deshayes, Governor of Montargis, the King said to the latter: "Deshayes, which do you love the more, myself or the Bishop of Geneva?" "Sire," answered the embarrassed gentleman, "I beg you to excuse me. You are my King and my sovereign, and for that reason I am bound to respect and love you incomparably more than anyone else." "Leaving aside the question of duty," returned the King, "I want you to confess frankly which of the two you love the better, him or myself." "Sire," replied Deshayes, "I admit openly that for the Bishop of Geneva I entertain a more intense and intimate friendship, which will not even suffer any comparison, since it exists in the supreme degree." "I am not vexed that it should be so," answered the King. "But tell him on my behalf that in that same friendship I desire to make a third."‡

On more than one occasion Henry expressed his intention of asking the Pope to send Francis into England in order to attempt the conversion of James I, deeming the Coadjutor particularly suited by his sanctity and knowledge to treat with a monarch who was credited by report with the possession of much learning.* In the meanwhile, the King strove to retain the Saint in France, making his request no fewer than five times, and promising him the highest and most influential positions. "Stay with me, M. de Genève," he said one day to Francis, "and I will get you a better position than the one you hold in the states of the Duke of Savoy." "Sire," answered the other, "I beg Your Majesty to excuse me, but I cannot accept your offer. I have married a poor wife and I cannot quit her for one that is richer. If Your Majesty has any kind feeling towards me, I ask nought else of you than the re-establishment of the Catholic religion and of its churches in the country of Gex." In vain the King persisted and called to his aid the help of those who were known to have most influence with the Coadjutor: to all such persuasions he returned an unvarying refusal.†

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* C. A. de S., l. v, p. 319. Hamon and Pérennès quote De Maupas, p. 179; and De Baudry's MS.

† *Ibid.*, p. 321.

‡ Hamon quotes De Cambis, Tom. I, p. 426—De Maupas, p. 180.

In spite of these refusals, Francis never lost the King's goodwill. At the end, Henry, wishing at all costs to do him some sort of favour, and learning that his income was of the slenderest, sent the royal treasurer to him with letters patent, allotting to him a considerable pension. Generous as the action was, it placed the Coadjutor in a delicate position. On the one hand, even had he wished to do so, he could hardly expect the Duke of Savoy to approve of his accepting a pension from a foreign monarch, especially when that monarch was the particular object of Charles Emmanuel's aversion: on the other hand, he did not want to offend the French King by a refusal that might seem ungracious. Eventually his unfailing tact found a way out of the dilemma. "Sire," he replied to the King, "I thank Your Majesty with all my heart for your kind remembrance of so humble a person as myself. I accept with the greatest pleasure your royal generosity. You will allow me, nevertheless, to explain my position frankly. Thanks to our Lord, I am at present in such circumstances that I have no need of this pension. I therefore humbly ask Your Majesty to deign to have it preserved for me in the hands of your treasurer, so that, should I have need of it in the future, I shall be able to avail myself of its help." The King was clever enough to understand that this was a refusal, but great enough to appreciate the manner in which it was conveyed. He remarked openly before several people that never had he known anyone who could season a refusal more graciously than the Coadjutor of Geneva.‡

* Dep. of M. de Charmoisy.

† Pérennès quotes: Dep. of M. de Charmoisy; also St Jane Frances, art. 45; De Cambis, Tom. I, p. 430.

‡ Hamon quotes D. Jean de S. F., p. 451.

For some time past Mme. Acarie had entertained a desire to establish in France, and particularly at Paris, a house of Carmelite nuns under the reformed rule of St Teresa. She had spoken of her desire to the Duchess of Longueville, who immediately approved of the idea and directed her energy and influence towards its realization. As a preliminary, she called together a kind of council, composed of learned and experienced ecclesiastics, to deliberate over the matter. This council consisted of Francis de Sales, the Abbé de Bérulle, the Abbé de Bretigny, Dom Beaucousin, a Carthusian prior, and Doctors Duval and Gallemant. During the course of several sessions these ecclesiastics considered the idea of the new foundation and the circumstances that had led to its inception: they gave it as their final opinion that the undertaking was inspired by the grace of heaven, and that it was manifestly destined to the greater glory of God and the salvation of souls. A difficulty was discovered in the fact that it would be impossible to find in France any Carmelite fathers of the Teresian reform to govern the proposed convent, but this difficulty was removed by a precedent, which had just been given in Rome, where a house of the same Order had been placed under the direction of an Oratorian priest. Consequently a choice was made of three learned, pious, and experienced clerics to fulfil a similar office for the proposed house in Paris. It was furthermore decided that the Duchess of Longueville should solicit the approval of the King, that another person should seek the authorization of the Bishop of Paris, and that application should be made to the Holy See to obtain the apostolic letters necessary for the canonical erection of the establishment. The approval of the King and of the Bishop of Paris was speedily obtained. The Holy Father, on receiving the Coadjutor's petition, which was supported by a number of distinguished people, appointed a congregation of sixteen cardinals to consider the matter. As a consequence of their deliberations, he authorized by brief the erection of convents of the daughters of St Teresa both in Paris and throughout France. All this, of course, took considerable time, and it was not till three years later that Sisters of the Order, who had been sent from Spain for the new foundation, were able to enter into definite possession of their house. This took place on August 24, 1605. Mme. Acarie herself, as we have seen, entered the newly-formed order.

It was during the consultations about the introduction of these Sisters into France that the Coadjutor and M. de Bérulle became thoroughly well acquainted, and were thus able to form for each other a high mutual appreciation, which was the beginning of a long friendship. Francis, admiring in M. de Bérulle one of the most enlightened and clear-sighted minds that he had ever met, urged him to establish in France a society devoted to the education of the clergy, one of the crying needs of the time: and such was, in fact, the original object of the congregation of the Oratory founded by this distinguished man. M. de Bérulle, on his side, full of admiration for the eminent qualities of his new friend, and especially for his perfect balance of temper, strove to hold him back in Paris, in order that he might undertake the direction of the projected society. Francis, however, refused to accept this work, partly because his position as Coadjutor made it practically impossible, and partly because he felt that M. de Bérulle himself was the man destined by Providence for the purpose.*

Another person who made the Coadjutor's acquaintance at this time, and who continually sought the help of his counsel, was the Abbess of Montmartre. This was Marie de Beauvilliers, daughter of the Count de Saint-Agnan. At the age of twelve she had taken the habit of St Benedict in the Abbey of Beaumont and, when only twenty-four years old, was made Abbess of Montmartre. The observance of this convent had become somewhat relaxed, and she was devoting all her efforts, in spite of much opposition, to the necessary reform.† She sought the help of the Coadjutor in this difficult work, and received from him encouragement and such counsels of prudence as her youth and inexperience needed.

In the meanwhile Francis continued to preach whenever it was possible to accept an invitation to do so, and God chose to bless his efforts in a remarkable manner. One day, when he was preaching in a church attached to a monastery but open to the faithful, he happened to lose the thread of his thought by one of those mental accidents which sometimes happen to the best of speakers. In his embarrassment he took refuge in a train of ideas that suddenly occurred to his mind, and, branching off into a digression on a matter of controversy, treated it with such force and inspiration that a lady in the congregation, noticing the alteration of his plan and the power of his language, murmured aloud: "It is not M. de Genève who is preaching now, but the Holy Ghost speaking by his mouth, and something remarkable will surely happen to prove the truth of what I say." The event justified the prophecy. When the sermon was finished, a Protestant lady of noble birth, touched and convinced by what the Coadjutor had said during the strange digression, came to see him, and asked to be received into the Church.‡

On another occasion his words effected a conversion of a different character. There was in the congregation to which he was speaking a young lady of the Court, famous for her beauty, her wit, and the charm of her manners. A child of pleasure, her head filled with the romantic ideas which she found in the novels of her time, and flattered by the attentions of the young noblemen whom her grace and beauty drew towards her, she devoted herself, with all the arts of her sex, to her natural ambition for admiration and to the attractive follies of the joyous life around her. In spite of such obstacles and the frivolity of mind that was her ordinary characteristic, she was touched by the words that fell from the lips of the Saint, and visiting him early the next day, begged him in tears to become the guide of her soul and to direct her steps into a worthier way. He received her with kindness, studied the disposition of her character, and was charmed by the yet unspoiled sweetness and goodness of her nature. Yet it was the very charm and kindliness of this character that were her greatest danger. "I see well, my dear child," he said, "that you will never go direct to God: you will reach him only through the medium of creatures." The work which she had set herself to do was difficult indeed. Yet her obedience to the wisdom of his advice, and her fidelity in carrying out the plan of life which he marked out for her, accomplished that which had at first seemed impossible. She obtained a complete victory over the easy-going nature and emotionalism of her character, learned to find her highest happiness in the strict observance of God's law, and became a model of virtue amidst the many dangers and difficulties inseparable from the life of the Court of those days.

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* *Vie du Cardinal de Bérulle*, by M. Houssaye.

† See Note to Lettre CLXXV, p. 173, vol. xii, E.N.

‡ C. A. de S., l. v, p. 324.

It was cases like this that gave Francis his greatest anxiety in the direction of souls. His most powerful resource was a combination of tact and patience, with an understanding of the limits of each particular nature. "I draw what I can from them," he would say, "often waiting a long time for the opportunity to throw a little word of advice in their way."

Another lady of similar disposition, equally eminent for her birth and intelligence, touched by one of his sermons, came to consult him as to whether she should enter the religious life. In one sense she was drawn towards this state, whilst at the same time feeling a strong aversion to much that it entailed. "I would be unwilling," he replied, "to drop one little grain of corn into the balance in order to make you a religious: I only want to help you to become a good Christian." Leaving her thus with a complete sense of liberty, he guided her skilfully along the path which, it seemed, was marked out for her by divine Providence. Eventually, of her own action, she pursued her original idea, put it into execution with full spontaneity, and became an exemplary religious.*

It must be borne in mind, however, that this work of preaching and direction was, during his stay in Paris, a secondary labour. He was ever mainly occupied with the question of the re-establishment of the Catholic religion in the country of Gex, and pursued his purpose with untiring diligence. Nevertheless, the case dragged on. For a long time it was held up by the arrest of Baron de Lux for complicity in the Biron intrigue, for, since he was Governor of Burgundy, the country of Gex fell under this jurisdiction. Happily for him, and incidentally for Francis, Henry's policy in dealing with the plot was to use leniency towards the lesser conspirators, especially if they were honest and thorough in confessing what they knew of the affair. Baron de Lux wisely took advantage of this merciful disposition on the part of the King, admitted his share of guilt, told all he knew, and was once more reinstated in the royal favour. So valuable was his information that Henry told the Comte de Soissons he would not have missed such knowledge for two hundred thousand crowns.

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* Hamon quotes De Cambis, Tom. I, p. 422.

Eventually the King sent Baron de Lux back to his government of Burgundy, ordering him, as far as the country of Gex was concerned, to re-establish the Catholic religion in every place where there was a sufficient number of Catholics. He was, however, to exercise discretion, to effect his policy little by little, and to do it in such a way as not to irritate the Protestants by the simultaneous formation of a large number of parishes. The King wrote in the same sense to the Parliament of Dijon, declaring by public proclamation that he took under his special protection all the ecclesiastics of Bugey, Valromey, and Gex. Francis, seeing his work at an end, prepared to return to Savoy. The bulls for his consecration had been received, and the growing infirmities of Mgr. de Granier made it imperative that he should take upon himself as soon as possible the full duties of the episcopate.

CHAPTER XV*

(1602)

Foundation of the Holy House and Jubilee at Thonon—Death of Bishop Claude de Granier—Francis hears the news at Lyons—Preparation for the episcopate—Retreat at Sales—Letter to the holy Father —Letter to the "Filles-Dieu" of Paris—A new rule of life—Consecration at Thorens—Public entry into Annecy

WHILST Francis was at Paris two notable events had taken place at Thonon: these were the founding of the "Holy House" and the celebration of the Jubilee.

From the very beginning of his mission in Chablais the Provost had asked the Duke of Savoy to found a Jesuit college at Thonon and a congregation of preachers: he had also petitioned that a house of refuge might be instituted in the town, so that those amongst the neophytes who suffered from extreme poverty might find therein both work and the necessities of life. As the number of converts increased beyond expectation, the plans of the Provost, and especially of Father Chérubin, assumed more ambitious proportions.

Geneva, because of its wonderful position, was a great centre for all kinds of commerce, both great and small. The people of the converted countries, drawn either to this city or to Lausanne for the purposes of buying and selling, were often submitted to circumstances which were a grave danger to their faith. Still more perilous was the lot of those who, attracted to these great centres by the hope of employment or by the desire to learn a trade or to study science and letters, were induced to make them their place of residence. It was difficult to be a Catholic and easy to be a Protestant within the walls of these cities. To those who embraced Calvinism favour was shown, they were put in the way of comfort and position, and a home and wife were assured to them: whereas, if any of the citizens abjured their Protestantism to return to the ancient faith, it meant personal persecution and confiscation of all property. The system was much the same on both sides. Consequently for many souls there was a constant strife between the dictates of conscience in religious matters and the desire of material happiness amidst the things of the world.

To provide against the dangers to which the proximity of the Swiss cities exposed the Catholics of Chablais, Father Chérubin

* Hamon, l. iii, chap. iv.

conceived the idea of founding at Thonon an institution which would perform the threefold function of university, technical school, and house of refuge, where those who desired to become Catholic, or who had already joined the Church, or even who had been born in the faith, might study, find work, or learn a trade according to their needs. The profits were to be shared between the workers and the House: whatever was left over from the necessary expenditure on the latter was to be employed in buying the necessities of life and various other commodities, which would be sold to the people at the lowest possible price, in order that they might have no further need to frequent Geneva or any other of the Protestant markets. The idea was an ambitious one, and to our modern ideas contained incongruities: an institution which would combine the work of a university, a trade-craft school, a workhouse, and a co-operative stores, must surely be a complex piece of machinery. If run successfully, it would be a cure for all social evils.

Something of the sort, however, was evidently necessary, and the plan received the full approval of Mgr. de Granier and of all those to whom it was proposed. It also received the approbation of the Duke of Savoy, who had already given the work a beginning by decreeing the erection of a loan-bank and of a handicraft-school, called by the quaint name of a Hostelry of Virtue. His Highness wrote to the Pope for approval of the new project, and, when there was delay in obtaining an answer, despatched Father Chérubin to Rome to expedite the affair. Eventually Cardinal Anne d'Escars de Givry was commissioned to examine the proposals by the Holy Father, who, on receiving a favourable report, published a bull, dated September 13, 1599, giving power to found the suggested institution under the title of the Holy House. By the terms of this bull the house was to be governed by a Prefect and seven secular priests, who would follow as far as possible the rule of the Roman Oratory. It was to enjoy all the rights and privileges of the public universities, especially such as were accorded to the universities of Bologna and Perugia. It was to be endowed by the annexation of three conventual priories, as soon as these incumbencies became vacant: the priories in question were St Jeoire, near Chambéry, Nantua, and Contamine-sur-Arve. Finally the House was placed under the immediate protection of the Holy See and of one of the cardinals, and the privilege of gaining a plenary indulgence under the usual conditions on all feasts of our Lady was granted to those who should dwell therein.* Cardinal

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* At the risk of giving a superfluous warning, the writer desires to remind non-Catholic readers that an *indulgence* does not mean leave to commit sin. It means the remission of punishment due to sin already forgiven. Even when sin is pardoned and the soul received once more into God's favour, penance may still have to be endured, as is seen from the punishment of David

Baronius was appointed as Protector and Francis de Sales as Prefect. To the Prefect, in conjunction with his priests and in consultation with the Protector, was granted full power to formulate the statutes of the House, to interpret and correct them according to need, and to impose obedience thereto upon all the members of the institution.

When the news of the proposed institute was bruited abroad, it aroused considerable interest, and a number of people came forward with offers of help. One nobleman, who had been recently converted to the faith, made a donation of 8,000 crowns (about £1,178 of our money). The Duke also became a practical patron. Not content with confirming the house by means of several charters, he made it a gift of 16,000 crowns (£2,356), assigned to it considerable revenues, and granted to it a number of privileges, such as exemption from taxes, rights of hunting, fishing, and pasturage. Francis immediately set to work to frame the constitutions by which the House was to be governed. He began by a study of the rules of the Oratory; then he consulted the Bishop of Geneva, the Archbishop of Vienne, several theologians, and a number of men well known for their wisdom and business capabilities. Above all, he constantly sought the help of the Spirit of God in meditation and prayer.

The House, in its beginnings, was divided into four principal sections. The first was composed of the prefect and seven secular priests: these were to be employed in parochial work, with the Church of St Hippolytus, which afterwards received the title of our Lady of Compassion, as the parish church: to it was added, as a dependence, the Church of St Augustine. To them also was entrusted the education of seven choirboys, who were to form the nucleus of a seminary. All were to rise at four o'clock in the morning during the greater part of the year, but at a later hour during the winter months when the darkness made such early hours impracticable. They were to begin the day with the recitation of the Office. This was to be sung in its entirety on feasts of the first class and on those of our Lady: on other days only the last three of the Little Hours and Vespers and Compline were to be recited publicly. Care was to be taken that all the functions were carried out properly in their minutest details according to the rules of the cathedral of Geneva. All absence from Office was to be punished by fines. There was one curious regulation, which would have seemed superfluous, unless directed specially against

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after the prophet had assured him that God had forgiven his sin. The Church received from Christ the power of remitting this punishment as well as absolving from the guilt of sin (Matt. xvi 19). So far from being leave to commit sin, an indulgence can only be gained by one whose past sins have been forgiven through repentance and absolution, who is thus in a state of grace, and who consequently has a firm and honest intention of avoiding grievous sin in the future.

a laxity of the times: it enacted that those who attended the Offices should do so in cassock, surplice, and biretta, with their tonsure clearly marked, and that those offending against this rule should be punished as if they had been absent. It would seem from this that some of the clergy of the diocese were in the habit of attending choir in their ordinary clothes. A Mass was to be celebrated every day at four o'clock, except in the winter months, when it was deferred till five. The duties of the sacristan were laid down with the most minute care. Amongst these was another curious rule, which enacted that all the vestments should be exposed to the sunlight four times a year, presumably as a remedy against damp. In order to promote a spirit of study amongst the clergy of the House, a conference was to be held each Monday on cases of conscience and rubrics, and another conference on Wednesdays would deal with the administration of both spiritual and temporal matters, as well as the observance of the rule. The priests were to have their meals in common, during which the Holy Scripture was to be read aloud for a quarter of an hour and then some spiritual book. No one was to leave the house without giving notification of his destination to the Superior, and all had to return home by the time of the evening Angelus. The regulations assigned to each member of the establishment the duties which were to fall to his share. The Prefect, of course, had the charge of governing, and of seeing that the rules were kept. To the parish priest was assigned the instruction of the faithful and the administration of the sacraments. The almoners, two in number, were to search out the poor people, to discover and verify their needs, and to distribute alms accordingly.

The second section of the Holy House was composed of preachers, whose duty it was to give missions and special sermons to the various districts of the neighbourhood, and to act as auxiliary priests by officiating in those parishes which might be in need of their ministrations for the time being. This function was committed to the Capuchin fathers, who were incorporated with the Holy House for the purpose.

The third section consisted of the masters, whose duty it was to teach in the elementary school and in the college. This charge was undertaken by the Jesuit fathers during the lifetime of Clement VIII, who paid the revenues for their upkeep out of his own purse. On the Pope's death this payment ceased, and as the House itself was not in a position to supply the deficit, the fathers found themselves obliged to go. They were succeeded by lay-masters, who were a lamentable failure. Eventually the difficult task was undertaken by the Barnabite fathers, under whom the college achieved such success and distinction as to merit the special protection of the Duke of Savoy.

The fourth and last section was composed of new converts or of those seeking instruction as a preliminary to their conversion. To these the necessary instruction was given, and if there were amongst them such as were very poor, they were taught some art or trade by which they would afterwards be enabled to earn their living.*

After many delays the Bishop of Geneva, accompanied by M. de Bavoz, President of the Senate of Savoy, and by Father Chérubin, who had returned from Italy for the occasion, proceeded to the canonical erection of the Holy House and to the opening of the Jubilee. This was on the eve of Pentecost, May 25, 1602. Francis was at this time in Paris.

It was not in those days customary to extend to other parts of the Church the privileges of the Roman Jubilee, and the favour of this extension had been granted to a very small number of towns. In the year 1600, however, the Pope had promised Father Chérubin to grant this special privilege to the town of Thonon, if the request was made to him by one of the princesses of Savoy. It was accordingly arranged that the Duke's daughter, Princess Margaret, who was then only ten years old, should send the necessary petition to the Holy Father, and, on this being done, Pope Clement immediately gave it his assent. The Duke of Savoy, anxious to invest with the greatest solemnity this special Jubilee granted to a town of his dominions, at once took steps to supply the Bishop with the material help that was necessary, and sent Mgr. de Granier two thousand crowns, a dozen chalices, and a number of rich vestments. The aged Bishop, in spite of his infirmities, decided to take his part in lending dignity to the proceedings by the addition of pontifical ceremony, and made his way to Thonon, accompanied by a crowd of ecclesiastics, who were to devote themselves to the duties of the pulpit and the confessional. The Jubilee opened on May 25. The Bishop, accompanied by the President of the Senate and by Father Chérubin, went first to the church of St Hippolytus. There the President began by reading aloud the commission which he had received of putting the Holy House in possession of the priory of St Hippolytus. This was followed by the reading of the two papal bulls, the first decreeing the institution of the Holy House, the second granting the indulgence of the Jubilee to all those who should visit the church of Our Lady of Compassion, which was the title by which St Hippolytus was henceforward to be known. When these preliminaries were ended the Bishop performed the opening ceremony of the Jubilee, which was modelled on that of Rome, even to the opening of the holy door with the silver hammer. The function was carried out in the presence of a distinguished gathering, which included the Governor of Savoy, the Duke's commissaries, deputies from the Senate and from the Chamber of Finance, and all the authorities of the town. These notabilities were supported by a crowd of more than twenty thousand people. The occasion was marked by all the usual signs of popular festivity—the playing of bands, the blare of trumpets, the ringing of the bells, the firing of musketry salutes, and even the discharge of the guns of the château of Allinges.

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* C. A. de S., l. iv, p. 282.

The Bishop then proceeded to the canonical erection of the Holy House, to which he annexed for ever the church of St Hippolytus, under its new name of Our Lady of Compassion. He consecrated the High Altar under this title, and also four other altars under the titles of St Hippolytus, St Benedict, St Claud, and St Francis of Assisi. He afterwards blessed and placed over the High Altar a picture of our Lady of the Seven Dolours, and ordered that on the main arch of the sanctuary should be inscribed in letters of gold—*Gaude, Maria Virgo; cunctas hæreses sola interemisti in universo mundo.*

During the two months allotted to the Jubilee immense crowds of people came to Thonon, not only from every quarter of Savoy, but from many parts of France, and in these crowds were found not only the humble and the poor, but the noble and the rich—wealthy merchants, great ladies, noble lords, and even princes. The total number of visitors was reckoned at some three hundred thousand. They came in processions of one or two thousand at a time, sometimes of as many as four thousand, marching in good order, singing canticles and hymns, preceded by cross-bearer and acolytes, carrying in their midst sacred banners, and accompanied by priests and religious in their ecclesiastical habit. More than forty of these processions had to pass through the city of Geneva, sometimes lodging there for the night: permission for the passage of the pilgrims was granted by the municipal authorities on condition that external signs of Catholicism should be covered up, that the crosses should be veiled, and the banners furled. Even with these conditions, the people were so moved by the earnestness and piety of the pilgrims that the ministers, fearing for the effect upon their flocks, besought the authorities that further processions should be refused admission.

As the pilgrims entered Thonon, they were met by members of the Confraternity of Penitents, who, acting as guides, led them to the church of Our Lady of Compassion. Here, during the day and even far into the night, the faithful were attended to by a large number of priests, confessions were heard, sermons and instructions delivered, and communion given at the numerous Masses celebrated from dawn till late in the morning. During the two months the number of communicants rose to one hundred and sixty-two thousand.

The results obtained by the celebrations of the Jubilee were wonderful in their nature, variety, and number. More than three hundred Calvinists, including two or three ministers, were received into the Church; several religious who had apostatized returned to their monastic profession; a number of people possessed by the devil were freed from their bondage; enemies were reconciled; restitution was made for past injustice; and the soldiers of the garrison, abandoning the license that so often tarnished the military life of those days, brought the restraint of virtue into their conduct, and became by their example and their words the best of auxiliaries to the clergy in the prosecution of their apostolic work.*

Meanwhile, the citizens of Geneva, though feeling obliged to give passage to the various pilgrimages, did their utmost to oppose the working of the Jubilee and to make it a failure, if not a catastrophe. Ridicule, of course, was the easiest weapon to hand: placards were printed and posted up, containing an impious and blasphemous description of the Jubilee, and making it the object of every kind of bitter raillery and contemptuous sarcasm. According to a report circulated at the time, an attempt was also made to introduce infectious diseases among the crowds who assembled at Thonon, though this sounds too diabolic to be true. The most practical of hindrances, however, was that by which the supply of provisions was made difficult, this being effected by a prohibition on the part of the Genevan authorities that any of their people should sell or transport any food to the town of Thonon during the course of the Jubilee. This last measure was foiled by the precautions which the Governor, under the orders of Charles Emmanuel, took against any possibility of famine: he thoroughly provisioned the town in spite of Geneva's embargo, and, still under the Duke's direction, saw that the very poorest of the pilgrims had food supplied to them free of all charge.

Furthermore, the success of the Jubilee was marked by several miraculous events, which gave witness of God's blessing upon the whole undertaking, and produced the most beneficial results throughout the neighbourhood. At its termination the Bishop was able to inform Pope Clement VIII that from the beginning to the end the Jubilee had been an uninterrupted miracle.†

Considerable offerings were made during this time to the church of Thonon, amounting in all to more than 20,000 crowns (about £2,944). After paying for the expenses of the Jubilee, the Bishop employed what was left for the benefit of the religious work of the town and district. The Syndics of Thonon had mortgaged the property of the ancient Benedictine priory of St Hippolytus to the city of Fribourg: this was now redeemed by the payment of 10,000 crowns. Other sums were used to buy back from the present owners certain ecclesiastical property which had been sold to them by the Bernese. What was left over from these transactions was put into the care of business men, who employed this capital for the benefit of the Holy House.*

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* Hamon quotes *Vie de Claude de Granier*, p. 237 *et seq.*

† *Ibid.*, p. 240.

As can easily be imagined, the full idea of the Holy House was never actually realized. It was too ambitious under the circumstances of the times. The country itself was almost bankrupt, thanks to the continual religious wars; Charles Emmanuel, occupied with his ambitious schemes and his plans for the taking of Geneva, failed to watch over the institution as he should have done; and the death of Pope Clement VIII, who passed away soon afterwards, was a further blow to the establishment in which he had taken such practical and generous interest. Two sections, however, of the House did a great work: the Capuchin fathers, by their continued zeal in giving missions throughout the country, contributed greatly to the development and confirmation of the restored religion in the bailiwicks, while the college, served first by the Jesuits and afterwards by the Barnabite fathers, became the nursery of many well-educated priests and laymen, several of whom gained great distinction in their day.

No sooner had the Bishop of Geneva finished the business affairs which we have described above than he fell ill of dysentery, accompanied by other complications. He had evidently overtaxed his strength in the course of the last few months. From the very first he declared that he would never recover and insisted on receiving the Holy Viaticum. He was taken, at his own command, to the château of Polinge, in Faucigny, which belonged to his nephew, the Abbé de Chissé. Here he turned all his attention to the final needs of his soul, received the last sacraments with the greatest devotion, and died on September 17, 1602. True to his vocation as a Benedictine monk, he had no need to make a will. The only money found in his house after his death was the sum of threepence. By the sale of his furniture and books, property which had been absolutely essential to his work and position, enough money was found to pay the few honourable debts which were his only legacy.† "During the space of twenty years," says Charles Auguste de Sales, "he showed himself a true prelate. He was austere in his habits and manner of living, contented with that which was merely necessary, a bold and powerful defender of the Church's liberty, strong and constant in courage, learned and eloquent beyond the ordinary, very generous towards the poor, and taking no account of the things of earth."‡

Francis de Sales was at Lyons, on his return journey from Paris, when he learned the news of his Bishop's death. This was on September 29. Full of love and admiration for Claude de Granier, his first emotions were those of a deep grief and a bitter sense of loss.

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* Hamon quotes *Missions des Capucins dans le Chablais*, l. iv, p. 82.

† *Vie de Claude de Granier*, p. 249.

‡ C. A. de S., l. iv, p. 325.

But the news of the Bishop's death thrust upon him more than a personal grief. The burden which had been hitherto placed on the shoulders of another was now transferred to his own. He accepted that burden in the spirit of devotedness and self-sacrifice, consecrating himself with all the strength of his being to the service of God and his people, resolving to live henceforth for that object only, and determining to sacrifice to it all other interests, even, if need be, his life itself. Like all conscientious and holy men to whom the charge of a responsible position is offered, he was filled with fear for the future. He realized how great was the task which was given to him, and how difficult it would be to carry on the work of his saintly predecessor. But with this fear was mingled a holy confidence. "For," as he said himself, "my elevation is not my own doing, but that of Providence: thus I am enabled to place all its responsibility in the hands of God. I have been made a bishop by his fatherly goodness and by the deliberate charity of my friends: that thought makes my burden lighter, though it also obliges me to render to God and my neighbour love for love and zeal for zeal."*

Occupied, as he was, with such thoughts he made his way to Annonay, in order to consult Mgr. Pierre de Villars. This prelate had formerly been Archbishop of Vienne, but had resigned this position in 1599 in favour of his brother, Jerome de Villars: he was living in retirement at Annonay, dividing his time between prayer, study, and an ardent apostleship among the Protestants. While occupying the episcopal chair, he had been a model bishop, devoting himself to preaching, catechising children, succouring the poor, giving conferences to his clergy, and, in his few spare moments, prosecuting his studies, in order to make himself still more capable for the work of his episcopate. Above all, he was a man of prayer. Francis considered himself fortunate in finding at his convenience the advice of such a wise and experienced counsellor. In order to enable Mgr. de Villars to give him the guidance most appropriate to his character, he made a general confession of his life to that prelate. According to Father de la Rivière, the aged bishop was so edified by the revelations of this confession that he could not hinder himself from exclaiming that it would serve him all his life as a subject of confusion for himself.

On leaving Annonay, the Coadjutor went to the château of Sales, where he intended making the retreat which is usually the preparation for a bishop's consecration. Before he began this retreat, however, there were one or two matters which had to be dealt with. Thus, on October 14, he wrote to the Duke of Savoy, acquainting that prince with the news of his return from Paris. A few days later he wrote to the Sovereign Pontiff. After relating the result of his negotiations with the French Government, he turns to the matter of the bishopric of Geneva:

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* *Année de S. F. de S.*, Sep. 18.

"Whilst I was on my return journey, I received the sad news that our Bishop of Geneva had ended his days just as the Jubilee of Thonon had drawn to its close. No greater loss could have been inflicted upon this province, no greater cause of sorrow could have befallen this people. To you, O Supreme Pontiff, who are so well known for your constant vigilance, I will say of this other pontiff but one thing. Placed over this church now twenty-five years ago, he never at any time deprived it of the help of his presence:* and partly by his own labours, partly through the work of others, he brought back no fewer than twenty-five thousand erring sheep to the fold of Christ. A man whose religion, morals, piety, and constancy were modelled on those of Christian antiquity, he was, indeed, one of those souls who are worthy of immortality and *whose memory is in benediction.*

"This great man, Holy Father, had asked not long ago that I, who was endeared to him by no bond of flesh and blood, should be appointed as his coadjutor and successor, a request which, to his great joy, was granted to him by Your Holiness's benignity and kindness. Wherefore I received apostolic letters, by which the Holy See sanctioned my appointment in the place of him who is dead. . . .

"It only remains to me, therefore, to commit myself and my charge with the utmost confidence to the care of divine Providence. To you, most holy and compassionate Father, I offer, as far as in me lies, the deepest thanks for the immense benefits which your apostolic munificence has bestowed upon me. Not only have you raised me to the episcopate, but, with a liberality worthy of your supreme position, you have graciously dispensed me from making those offerings which on such an occasion are due to the apostolic treasury. I can find no way of making a return for such kindness except by offering you my most grateful and devoted goodwill, which I dedicate wholly and entirely to Your Holiness's service and pleasure. . . ."†

In another letter, written in reply to an official message of congratulation from the Syndics of Annecy, he said:‡ "I wish I could see in myself a reason for the joy you express at my promotion proportionate to the happiness I find in the friendship which you bear me: I would be much less afraid of the responsibility of the charge in which I am henceforth engaged. I trust, nevertheless, in the goodness of God, hoping that he will give me the grace of his holy help, so that I may render you the service which I desire for you and to which my birth and education amongst you call me. . . ."

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* The failure of some bishops in the matter of residence was one of the causes of that decline in religion which resulted in the so-called Reformation.

† E.N., Tom. XII, Lettres CLXII-CLXVI, p. 173 *et seq.*

‡ *Ibid.*, Lettre CLXVII, p. 134.

On November 18 Francis began his retreat under the direction of the Jesuit, Father Jean Fourier, rector of the college of Chambéry: three days later, in the church of Thorens, he took his oath of fidelity to the Sovereign Pontiff.

Even during his retreat he found himself obliged to carry on his apostolic work and the guidance of souls, for it was during this time that he wrote a long letter to the community of the *Filles-Dieu* at Paris. During his stay in the French capital Francis had several times visited this convent, which was situated in the rue Saint-Denis, and had seen in it nought but what gave him reason for edification. Since his departure, however, he had received information that, while there was nothing seriously wrong with the community, a number of minor abuses had crept into their daily life. Some of the religious, it appeared, were permitted to make use of private incomes so as to indulge themselves in greater comforts than were possessed by the other nuns, whilst a few of the Sisters, who happened to be in poor health and who were not possessed of personal means, did not receive the food and attention for which their condition called. It was also reported that some of the recreations in vogue within the convent were of too frivolous a nature and unsuited to the spirit of recollection and quiet which should prevail in a religious house. It was of these things that Francis felt impelled to write. It is impossible to give here anything but the merest epitome of this long and wonderful letter, with a few of its most salient passages. Even in doing this there is a risk of misrepresenting the general character of the writing, full, as it is, of gentleness and tact, by crowding into a small space a collection of its stronger colours, deprived of the background of softer tones indispensable for the proper understanding of their intended value.

After an opening in which he expressed his affection for them and the consolation which he had derived from their acquaintance, he goes on to say that that consolation had been somewhat spoiled by certain reports which he had heard concerning them—reports which sprang from no spiteful or calumniatory source, but which had been received from those whose known honesty and charity compelled belief. After alluding to the subjects of complaint, he says: " My dear ladies, you must correct your house of these faults, which are without doubt contrary to the perfection of the religious life. . . ." He points out that they must be corrected quickly for the very reason that at the moment they were small. " You must correct them, in my opinion," he says, " because, so it seems, they are small, and so must be combated while they are small: for if you wait until they have grown more formidable, you will not easily be able to remedy them at all. . . . If these defects are small, as it may seem to some of you, are you not so much less excusable for not correcting them? . . ." He then suggests that, in reality, they were not so small as they might at first seem, for the use that was being made of the private pensions of some of the sisters in favour of those sisters was contrary to the vow of poverty. "Is that evil a small one, I beg of you," he writes, "which attacks and spoils a noble part of your body, namely, the vow of poverty? One can be a good religious without singing in choir, without wearing this or that particular habit, without this or that abstinence: but without poverty and community spirit it is impossible. . . .

"I suppose you consider that in these pensions and other matters there is nothing contrary to your vow because it is all done with the permission and dispensation of your Superioress. An unsavoury word is that of *permission* or *dispensation* when dealing with the spirit of perfection. It would be better to live under laws and regulations than to have exemptions, dispensations, and permissions. Here in itself is a subject for reformation. . . ." Later on he remarks: "Permissions only enter into a monastery by favour: but, having gained footing therein, they want to remain there by force and can only be driven out by severity. . . .

"There are permissions which may in some way be good: but this one is not so, for it is, after all, a question of individual ownership, although veiled and hidden. . . . It is a question of an income possessed by one Sister and not by another. . . . If it is not a matter of ownership, how is it that one Sister has more comfort without any need, and another more need without any comfort?" After a further demonstration of this point, he adds: "'The religious who has a farthing,' the ancients used to say, 'is not worth a farthing.'"

He then goes on to signalize a fault not uncommon in religious houses and even in orders as a whole. "The love and affection you have for your house may also be a great hindrance to your reformation, because that affection will not allow you to think evil of it nor to listen willingly to criticism against it. But take care, I beg you: self-love is cunning, it glides and penetrates everywhere, making us believe it to be other than it is. True love for our house makes us jealous of its real perfection and not of its reputation only. . . . Your house is fair and virtuous, that is the truth: but the passage of time and of the years has somewhat tarnished its appearance. Why do you not restore its ancient colours by a holy reformation? . . .

"I think there is another hindrance to the reformation of your house. It is, perchance, that you think it could not be maintained without these incomes, because it is poor. On the contrary, I think that the convent is poor because it has these incomes. . . . The richness of the individual hinders that of the public. If, once and for all, you were really poor individually, you would afterwards be rich as a community.

"God wills that we should trust in him according to our vocation. It is not required that a layman and man of the world should rely upon the Providence of God in the way in which we ecclesiastics ought to do; for we are forbidden to make treasure and to trade, whereas it is not so forbidden to the man of the world: nor are the secular clergy obliged to hope in that same Providence like religious; for religious ought to have so much trust therein as to have no anxiety individually for the means of life. . . . Now your religious state obliges you to resign yourselves to the Providence of God without the aid of any income or personal property. . . .

"I suspect that there is still another hindrance to your reformation: and that is that perchance those who have suggested the operation to you have handled the wound somewhat roughly. But would you for that reason refuse to be cured? Surgeons are sometimes obliged to widen the wound in order to heal it . . . it is for such a reason, perhaps, that certain people have used the knife almost too thoroughly. I praise their method, although it is not the one I follow myself, especially when dealing with minds as noble and as brave as are yours. I think it is better simply to show them the evil and to put the knife into their own hands, that they may do their own surgery. . . . Nevertheless, good counsel ought always to be accepted, whether it be dipped in gall or sweetened by honey."

Later on the Saint advises the ladies to consult experienced, learned, and tactful priests for their guidance in so difficult a matter. "To these you ought to confide your trouble, in order that they may decide what will be most suitable: for your sex has been subject since the creation to a condition of obedience, and never succeeds before God except by submitting to guidance and instruction."

Towards the end of the letter he excused the fact that he had felt constrained to reproach them by pointing out that it was the very force of his admiration for their genuine virtue and great qualities which inspired his strictures. "It saddens me to see such great qualities, as there are in your house, enslaved by puny imperfections, and, in the words of Scripture, to see your virtue reduced to captivity and your spiritual beauty in the hands of the enemy. It is a pity to see a precious liquid lose its price through the presence of some small impurity, or an exquisite wine by the mixing with water. . . . I beg and conjure you by God's abiding grace that is within you, rid your house of all that is superfluous, and bestow upon it whatever it lacks.

"Give me, I beg of you very humbly, this consolation—that you will read this my letter in calm and tranquillity of mind, and will weigh it, not with any common weights, but with those of the sanctuary and of holy charity. And I beg God that he will give you the resolution necessary to your welfare, for the utmost sanctifying of his holy name within you, so that you may be in name and in deed the daughters of God. . . ."*

But cares such as were exemplified by this letter were unable to keep him from the main work which was before him during these days of retreat. He began by making once more a general confession, with the desire of purifying his soul to the utmost: the rest of the retreat was devoted to interviews with his director, to persevering prayer, and to a consideration of his future needs. All this was accompanied by his usual penitential practices, fasting, discipline, and the like. In a letter to a friend he wrote: " I am passing my soul in review, and feel in the depths of my heart a renewed confidence to serve God better in holiness and justice all the days of my life. I have experienced a strong realization of the infinite obligations by which I am bound to him. I have resolved to sacrifice myself for him with all possible fidelity, keeping my soul ever in his divine presence with a vehement joyfulness of spirit which in itself, it seems to me, will help me to love him well. For there is nothing in this world that is worthy of our love: we must give it all to this Saviour who has given us all of his. All earthly pleasures seem to me as nothing compared to this dominant love, for which I would willingly die—or at the least live only for its sake. How I long that this heart which God has given me should be inseparably and eternally bound to him! I have a great desire to advance in this holy love, and for this end I am imposing on myself a rule of life."†

We find this rule of life, or a part of it, in the pages of Charles Auguste de Sales.‡

" First of all," writes the Saint, " as to externals Francis de Sales, Bishop of Geneva, will abstain from wearing robes of silk, nor will his clothes be of more costly material than they have been hitherto: nevertheless, they will be clean and suitably made. He will not wear on his feet pumps with overshoes, both because this smacks of the vanity of the world and because it is forbidden by the regulations of his diocese.§ He will never go to church without rochet and cape, nor into the town; and, wherever possible, will observe the same rule in the house, so far as the cape is concerned. In house, church, and town, so far as will be permitted by circumstances, he will always wear his biretta. He will carry on his fingers nought but the pastoral ring. . . . He will not wear scented or expensive gloves, nor muffs of silk and fur. . . . His sash may be of silk, not of the most expensive kind, and to this sash he will fasten his rosary. Neither the laces of his shoes nor his stockings shall be of silk. His tonsure shall be kept well marked, his beard trimmed and not pointed, his moustache close cut.

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* E.N., Tom. XII, Lettre CLXVII, p. 136.

† Hamon quotes De Maupas, p. 125.

‡ C. A. de S., l. v, p. 327.

§ *Escarpins avec des mules ou galloches.* The *escarpins* were probably something corresponding to the modern patent leather shoe for evening wear. St Francis says that these *escarpins* were forbidden *par les statuts de son Eglise*: I conclude that the words *son Eglise* refer to his own diocese, not the universal Church.

"He will avoid the keeping of useless and expensive servants. Two of them shall be clerics, one to take charge of business matters, the other to assist at ecclesiastical functions. . . . They will be dressed in the Roman style, if possible, or perhaps like the priests of the Seminary of Milan, because that kind of dress costs less and is more convenient. There shall be a secretary, two serving-men, one for myself and one for my household; a cook with his scullion; and a footman, who shall wear a buff-coloured livery with purple edging. None of his servants shall wear plumes, nor swords, nor clothes of bright colours, nor long hair, nor moustaches turned up in exaggerated style. They shall go to confession and communion every second Sunday of the month, according to the rules of the Confraternity of the Holy Cross, in which they shall be enrolled, and they shall receive communion at the Bishop's Mass. They shall hear Mass every day, and on Sundays and feasts shall attend the whole of the divine Office in the cathedral church. They shall get up at five in the morning, but on feast-days, when they are to assist at Matins, they shall rise at four. They shall retire to rest at 10 o'clock: before this they shall assemble together in the common-room in order to recite the litanies. . . . The Bishop will say the prayer; all will make an examination of conscience and will then retire.

"In each room there shall be a small oratory or altar, with holy water, a pious picture, and an *Agnus Dei*. Two of the rooms shall be carpeted, one for visitors, and the other for the reception of those who have business to transact. Someone of the household must always be at home with the duty of receiving and introducing callers; and he must be courteous and kind in his manners, taking care to give offence to no one, whomsoever it may be. It is the greatest impudence on the part of the servants of a prelate to despise the clergy of inferior rank. All those who serve the Bishop of Geneva shall be told and instructed to give honourable treatment to all, but especially to priests.

"As to the episcopal table, it should be moderate and, as the Council says, frugal, yet at the same time clean and properly served. The priests shall have their place there, and, as far as possible, shall occupy the first places. Each one shall take it in turns to say the grace before and after meals, except on solemn feasts, when the Bishop will do so. . . . For half the time during dinner and supper some pious book shall be read aloud: the rest of the time shall be given to conversation of a suitable kind. Dinner shall be at 10, supper at 6. On fast-days the household will not sit down to this collation: dinner will be at 11 o'clock and collation at 7."

Then follow several regulations for the distribution of alms to the poor and to certain religious houses. Amongst such alms is mentioned the dinner to be given to the twelve poor men whose feet are washed at the *Mandatum* on Maundy Thursday. Then the Saint continues:

"As to the divine Offices, on all days of obligation the Bishop will assist at First Vespers, at High Mass, and at the Office which is recited before and after. Moreover, on the more solemn days, he will assist at Matins. . . . He will attend as often as he can the exercises of the Confraternities of the Holy Cross, of the Blessed Sacrament, of the Holy Rosary, of the Third Order, but especially of the Holy Cross. . . ."

So much as regards his public life.

"With regard to his private dispositions and, firstly, as regards study, he will strive to learn something every day, something which will be useful and suitable to his profession. Ordinarily he might have for the purpose of study the two hours between seven and nine o'clock in the morning; after supper he will cause to be read to him for the space of an hour some pious work, which will serve partly as study, partly as mental prayer.

"In the morning after the customary thanksgiving, prayer of invocation to God, and dedication of self, he will meditate for the space of an hour. . . . He will keep himself always in the presence of God and will invoke him on every occasion. As to ejaculatory prayer, he will draw these from his meditation of the morning or from the different objects which present themselves to him during the day. . . .

"He will recite the Office standing or on his knees; matins and lauds in the evening after his spiritual reading; prime, terce, sext, and none between six and seven o'clock in the morning—that is, after his meditation; vespers and compline before supper; and the rosary after vespers, along with its meditations, in accordance with the obligation of his vow to recite it. . . . On feast-days he will recite Vespers in choir, and his rosary during the High Mass.

"He will go out at nine o'clock to offer up the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, which he will celebrate every day, unless hindered by some extreme necessity, and, in order to celebrate it with greater devotion, he will form a collection and epitome of the different considerations and affections by which devotion towards this great mystery may be roused, and he will occupy himself therewith on leaving his room and going to the church. When he arrives at the sacristy, he will make his preparation, neither too short nor too long, in order not to spoil the devotion of those who are about to assist, by making them wait; the same for his thanksgiving. After Mass, he will talk with no one, and this also he will observe when going to Mass and especially with regard to secular matters. . . . In the evening he will attend the prayers of the household.

"He will go to confession every second or third day, unless necessity should arrange otherwise, to the most capable confessor whom he can conveniently find, and whom he will not change without necessity. He will sometimes go to confession in church in the sight of all, for the sake of example.

"In addition to the fast-days prescribed by the Church, he will fast on all the feasts of our Lady and on all Fridays and Saturdays."

Finally, he decides that he will make an eight-days' retreat every year, and discusses the manner in which it shall be conducted.

Such is the only part of the Saint's rule of life which has been preserved to us. The other part, dealing with the government of his diocese and his relations with his flock, has unfortunately been lost. In order to consecrate his rule by giving to it the character of an external command, he submitted it to Father Fourier, who approved of it and appended thereto his signature. During the rest of his life the Bishop remained faithful to its observance, except as regards the precise times laid down for the performance of his various duties, which he had to alter for the better accomplishment of his episcopal work. "For," said his brother, Count Louis de Sales, "the worry of business affairs soon taught him that these detailed rules are only suitable for those who are masters of their own time, and that for a bishop the sovereign rule must be that of charity."* Later on, in the year 1604, when at the request of André Frémiot, Archbishop of Bourges, he sent that prelate a similar, if not identical rule, he wrote: "It is in order to obey you that I send this poor writing, which for the greater part of its points, will be useless for you. Not, indeed, that it is undesirable that our episcopal households should be thus regulated—we know what St Paul says about it: but I know by my own experience that one must adapt oneself to the necessities of time, place, circumstance, and occupation. I confess to you that I have no scruple in freeing myself from my regulation when it is the service of my flock which preoccupies me, for then it needs must happen that charity be stronger than our own inclinations, however good our own self-interest makes them seem to us: and in composing this writing which I send to you, my design was not to trammel myself, but to give me a certain regularity without inflicting on myself any scruple of conscience, for God has done me the grace to make me love a holy liberty of spirit, just as much as he has given me to hate all dissoluteness and licence. In fine, my lord, we must say with the great Bishop of Hippo, *Amor meus pondus meum* (My love is my rule)."†

During this period Mme. de Boisy, following the example of her son, spent several days in a spiritual retreat, as a preparation for the graces which she hoped to receive during the consecration of the new Bishop. When this was ended, she devoted herself to decorating the church at Thorens, which had been chosen at the desire of the family for the place of the ceremony. Apart from the usual preparations necessary for such an occasion, the walls were hung with tapestry and curtains, and on the façade of the choir were depicted the armorial bearings of the De Sales, surmounted by crosier, mitre, and tassellated hat. It was graced by a scroll bearing the words: *Après de longues années le ciel.**

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* Hamon quotes Hauteville, *Maison de Sales*, p. 471.

† E.N., Tom. XII, Lettre CCXLVIII, p. 402.

The ceremony took place on December 8, the feast of the Immaculate Conception of our Lady, a day that had always been dear to Francis from his earliest years. Vespasian Gribaldi, formerly Archbishop of Vienne, was the consecrating prelate, assisted by Thomas Pobel, Bishop of St-Paul-Trois-Châteaux, and Jacques Maistret, of the Carmelite Order, who had been appointed Bishop of Damascus in the days of Gregory XIII. The Canons of the cathedral, on receiving Francis's resignation as Provost, had deputed four of their chapter to attend at the consecration, and had granted leave of absence from choir to all those who desired to accompany these representatives. The music was entrusted to the combined choirs of the cathedral and of the collegiate church of our Lady. The nobility of the country were represented by more than three hundred members of their order.

The function began at an early hour. Almost at the very beginning it was signalized by the favour of a strange and supernatural occurrence. As Francis was kneeling before the consecrating prelate, with his mind concentrated intensely upon what was about to happen to him, his face appeared to all the assistants to shine with a celestial radiance and he was manifestly wrapped in ecstasy. His mind was, at the same time, flooded with divine light, and he received a species of vision, in which he saw the Holy Trinity consecrating him Bishop, our Lady covering him with the mantle of her love and protection, and the two Apostles, SS Peter and Paul, standing at his sides for his defence and support. He remained in this state for half an hour, and then, to the consternation of all, fell to the ground unconscious. He recovered almost immediately, however, and assured his assistants that he felt himself in possession of his full strength. As the consecrator performed over him the various ceremonies, Francis saw clearly and distinctly, according to his own expression, the Three Persons of the Blessed Trinity operating in his soul the supernatural effects signified by the sacramental rite. The three bishops, on their part, experienced during the ceremony an indescribable spiritual consolation, to which they afterwards gave witness; the sanctity of the new prelate was so evident and so superabundant that it overflowed, as it were, upon all those who were around him, filling their hearts with the deep joy and peace of the sons of God. For himself, acting under the grace which this plenitude of the Sacrament of Holy Orders bestowed upon him, he vowed to consecrate himself entirely, without any reserve, to the service of souls, and to die for them, if such should be for their good. A special grace gave him to feel that God accepted this vow. Ten years later, in a letter to St Jane Frances de Chantal, he wrote: "It was then that God took me away from myself, to make me his own and to give me in turn to the people."*

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* C. A. de S., l. v, p. 334.

Soon after his consecration he sent Canon Louis de Sales to Annecy, to take possession in his name of the bishopric of Geneva. He himself spent a few more days in retreat at the château of Sales. For his formal entry into Annecy he chose December 14, because it was Saturday, the day of the week consecrated especially to our Lady. "I am happy," said he, "in the thought that the Blessed Mother of the Sovereign Pastor should introduce me into the fold of her son."† When the day arrived, a great number of noblemen came forward to escort the Bishop and to form his suite. When he and his attendants reached the outskirts of the city, he was met by four of the town councillors, who conducted him to the chapel of our Lady of Compassion. After saying a prayer and putting on his vestments, he was led to a chair, placed in the middle of the predella and facing the people, in whose presence he received a number of addresses—one from the city syndics, clad in their long robes and holding in their hands the ebony staves of their office, a second from the deputies of the Council, and a third from the Chamber of Finance. To each of these he gave suitable answers with that dignity and aptness which were peculiar to him.

When these preliminary courtesies were ended, the procession resumed its journey towards the cathedral. It was headed by a town serjeant, clothed in red: then came the religious Orders—Franciscans, Dominicans, Augustinians, the Canons of the collegiate church of our Lady, and the members of the cathedral chapter. As far as one can judge from the description given by Charles Auguste de Sales, this part of the procession was closed by the choir and by two of the cathedral cantors, "vested in cope and mitre and carrying long staves surmounted by heavy silver knobs."‡ These were followed by a priest, bearing the crosier, and by two Canons in tunics, who held the gremial by two of its corners in front of the Bishop. Francis, attended by two other Canons in tunics, was protected by a canopy, borne by four of the city syndics. After the usual episcopal attendants came the civil magistrates, the nobility, and a large crowd of people. When the cortege arrived at the gates of Annecy, the Bishop was saluted by a discharge of musketry, and the bells of the churches sent forth clamorous peals of welcome. Then the procession passed into the city, along streets that were lined with people eager to greet their new pastor and falling on their knees in the roadway, as he turned from side to side to bestow his blessing upon them. On arriving at the church of St Francis, which was used as the cathedral of the diocese of Geneva, the Bishop perceived that the whole façade of the building was decorated in his honour. Two large designs especially attracted his attention: the first showed his own armorial bearings, surmounted by a rod at the top of which was depicted a human eye, after the idea contained in the vision of Jeremias,* and accompanied by a scroll with the words, *Pastori excubanti* (To the watchful pastor); the second was a representation of the patron of the diocese, St Peter, bearing the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and supported by the inscription, *Claudunt et aperiunt* (They close and they open). The interior of the church was hung with tapestry and decorated with similar emblems. Thus, around the pulpit were placed four panels, giving four visions of a hand: in the first, this hand, stretching down from the clouds, was seen to be uprooting thorns and thistles; in the next, armed with a hammer, it was destroying a tower; in the third it was laying mortar upon a building in course of erection; and in the last it was planting olive and vine. Beneath each of the four panels was written respectively: *Ut evellas ; Ut destruas ; Ut aedifices ; Ut plantes*—words taken from the 10th verse of the 1st chapter of Jeremias: *I have set thee this day over the nations and over the kings to root up . . . to destroy, to build, and to plant.* Against the façade of the choir was hung a long picture, revealing one of those strange compositions, in which the Christian religion was fantastically mixed up with the heathen mythology so dear to the Renaissance. It represented God the Father surrounded by angels, and, with arms extended, gazing down upon the earth. This figure was accompanied by the words, *Fiat manus tua super virum dexterae tuae* (Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand), Ps. lxxix 18. Beneath the clouds was seen the goddess Pallas, fully armed, treading underfoot the headless body of the Gorgon, and holding up to Jupiter, her father, or, if you will, to the great God of all the world, the escutcheon of the saintly Bishop, surrounded by branches of olive; underneath was written in Latin, *By the divine art of Pallas.*

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* C. A. de S., l. v, p. 335 *et seq.* E.N., Tom XV, Lettre DCCCXXXI, p. 317. *Esprit*, Part IV, sect. 35. Hamon also quotes D. Jean de S. F., p. 172, La Rivière, p. 256, and dep. of François Favre.

† Pérennès quotes MS. of De Baudry.

‡ "Tous ces ordres ecclesiastiques estoyent magnifiquement fermez par deux chantres . . . revestus de chappes et de mittres, et appuyez a de grands bastons pommettez d'argent." C. A., l. v, p. 338.

When the Bishop reached the sanctuary, he knelt in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament for a few minutes; then, after kissing the altar, he went to the episcopal throne, where he had to listen to a panegyric of himself, pronounced by Canon Nouvellet. It is not quite clear whether this discourse was delivered from the pulpit, or, as Charles Auguste de Sales relates, from the Archdeacon's place in the stalls. The ceremony was brought to a conclusion by the singing of the *Te Deum* and the Bishop's benediction.*

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* "I see a rod watching" (Jer. i).

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* For a slightly different but interesting description of this event see Mugnier's *Petites Annales d'Annecy*, p. 25.

CHAPTER XVI*

(1603)

The Saint organizes his household—Appointment of diocesan officials—Francis resumes the hearing of confessions at Annecy—Letter on the right of asylum—Escalade of Geneva—Letter to the Abbess of Montmartre—Francis opposes the abuse of valentines

THE deep impression which the ceremony of the episcopal consecration made upon the mind of Francis de Sales lasted during the whole of his lifetime, though naturally it affected him more particularly during the first weeks of his episcopate. His own personal humility, coupled with his veneration for the sacred character impressed upon him, gave him at one and the same time a gentleness and dignity of conduct which commanded from all who knew him a similarly blended love and respect. As to his own relation to his office, the episcopal character held such reverence in his mind, that he could only regard its external adjuncts, his vestments, ring, mitre, and crosier, as so many sacred emblems which he felt utterly unworthy to bear; he never touched them except with the greatest reverence, and the mere sight of them was often sufficient to cast him down into depths of personal humility or to lift him by their significance to divine heights of spiritual contemplation. "On seeing them," writes the Abbé Hamon, "he would remember that henceforth he could only hold his life for God and for the Church, and that every moment of his existence belonged to the souls of whom he had taken charge. Entering upon the episcopate, like the ancient fathers, after having deserved it yet refused it, he regarded it not as an honour but as a burden, not as a promotion but as a consecration to suffering and self-sacrifice, not as a fortune but as a position of responsibility, which entailed his living an altogether heavenly life, lifted above the world and the senses." Some years afterwards the Saint revealed in a letter what he had felt at this time. "After my consecration as a bishop, coming from my general confession, and from the company of the saints and angels amongst whom I had made my new resolutions, I spoke only like one who is a stranger to the world; and although the wearing tumult of life may since have somewhat weakened the strong emotions of my heart, the resolutions of my will have, by the grace of God, remained unchanged."†

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* Hamon, l. iv, chap. i.

† Dep. of St Jane Frances de Chantal, Art. 23.

One of the Bishop's first cares was the organization of his house. Ever since the Bishops of Geneva had been driven from that city by force, the meagreness of their resources had hindered them from buying a house of their own. They rented a small establishment at Annecy, opposite the cathedral. This fact alone delighted the soul of the new Bishop, and when someone urged him to buy an episcopal palace, he answered: "Oh no! I do not desire it. It makes me happy to think that I have not a house of my own, and that my landlord can evict me, whenever he wishes to do so. It is a little touch of resemblance with my Master, Jesus Christ, who had not where to lay his head. I want to die with the glory of having nothing of my own—it is my ambition. Let the world talk as much as it likes: with the grace of God I will never swerve from this resolution."

It was in this spirit that he carried out the internal arrangements of his home. There was, indeed, for the reception of visitors one large and properly furnished apartment, which was called the Bishop's room. But for himself he chose a very small and humble study, and this, he said, was Francis's room. In the management of his household he exacted the strictest economy—an economy which sprang not merely from the slenderness of his revenue, but from his spirit of poverty and his lavish generosity towards the poor. The property of the bishopric of Geneva, the use of which the Senate of Savoy allotted to him by a decree of December 20, 1602, only brought to him the modest income of 1,000 crowns per annum, which, according to M. Hamon, was worth about £150.* Far from complaining of the meagreness of this sum, he used to maintain that it was sufficient. "My resources," he would say, "have indeed been cut down very close: but the Apostles had not as much as I have, and Jesus Christ himself was very much poorer. Would to God that by stripping ourselves of what is left we could manage to make the Catholic religion as free in Geneva as it is in La Rochelle! Would to God that we had there but one little chapel! If that were so, our religion would soon make progress there."

This mention of La Rochelle is an allusion to the fact that, while the Edict of Nantes left the Huguenots in possession of this and other Protestant strongholds, it also enacted that the Catholic religion should be tolerated therein. It may be fittingly remarked that Francis's idea of the Catholic liberty in La Rochelle seems to have been somewhat exaggerated, for Henry IV and Sully had the greatest difficulty in making the Huguenots exercise toleration in the Protestant cities.†

Under the guidance and rule of Francis de Sales the episcopal household of Annecy became a model establishment. While everything within it was neat and clean, there was an utter absence of luxury and useless display. Charity, gentleness, and concord reigned amongst its inmates; though the life that they led was almost as strict as that of a monastic house, yet there was no tinge amongst them of the grim severity of the Puritan. Care was taken that their bearing and conversation were such as suited the retainers of a saint, and whilst at recreation times their talk was full of cheerfulness and good humour, yet it contained none of that coarseness which was common enough in those days, and of which we find evidence in certain historical utterances of some of the most exalted personages of the time. Each hour of the day had its allotted task, and the rule of the house marked out the times which were to be given by some to their household work, by others to their business correspondence and study, and by all to the exercise of their religious duties. The Saint himself watched ceaselessly over their welfare, and though some of his corrections may seem to us nowadays to be rather severe as regards the fault concerned, yet they were so often accompanied by gentleness and a quaint touch of humour that the rebukes lost all their sting. Michel Favre, the devoted priest who accompanied him everywhere, relates one such incident. It was a rule of the house that there should be silence from the moment of night prayers until after meditation the next morning. On one occasion during this time of silence Favre, probably without noticing what he was doing, began to hum the melody of a psalm-tone or some portion of a Gregorian chant. The Bishop, leaving his room, sought the singer and rebuked him gently. "What are you doing, M. Michel?" he said. "This is not the time for singing the praises of God."*

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* The actual purchasing value of this sum must, however, have been much greater than what it is nowadays: the most rigid economy could not have kept a household of eight men on £150 per annum of modern money.

† *Vide* Catholic Encyclopaedia in article on Huguenots.

The household consisted of some seven or eight persons. Georges Rolland, who, after having served his master so long as personal servant, was at this time preparing for the priesthood, was appointed to the post of business-manager, or *economus;* André de Sauzea was the Bishop's chaplain, assisting the latter at all the Offices. Besides these two, there were a couple of men servants, one for the Bishop, the other for the household and visitors; a footman; a butler, who had care of the linen, the dining-room, and the cellar; and finally, a cook and his scullion. Francis had made it a fixed rule that his priests were never to render him any sort of menial service, or such as was more suitably assigned to a valet. His respect for the priesthood forbade his receiving from them even such assistance as is not unfrequently rendered to a prelate by the clerics of his episcopal suite. He would not even let them carry his cloak and hat. He had no private secretary, in spite of what he had decided upon in his rule of life. His reason for this was that he feared lest the use of a secretary might inconvenience people who might wish to write to him about confidential matters; he therefore decided to do his own correspondence, even if he had to employ therein a considerable part of his night-time. Neither would he have any women in his service. In fact, persons of the other sex were not admitted to the body of the house, but were only received in the gallery of the reception room. On one occasion, when he was urged to take into his employment an aged and virtuous woman for the purpose of looking after the household linen, he replied: " I am so far from taking into my service any woman, whatever her age or virtue might be, that I would not even have my own mother with me, supposing that she wished to leave the château of Sales; for if Mme. de Boisy is my mother, all the women who would come to see her are not."*

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* Dep. of Michel Favre.

The Bishop's next duty was to appoint the diocesan officials, who were to share his pastoral charge, and other officers, who depended upon his authority. These were the Vicar-General and his deputy, a judge of the episcopal court, a procurator fiscal, clerks or registrars, and, strange to say, a jailer. Judging that these appointments were, in several cases, too important to depend upon his own unaided choice, Francis convoked a meeting of the canons of the cathedral and other distinguished ecclesiastics, asked their advice as to those who might be considered most eligible for office, and, after taking their votes, appointed to the various positions those whom he thought most suited to fill them. As Vicar-General he nominated the brother of his friend the President, Canon Jean Favre, to whom he gave as deputy Canon Jean Déage, his former tutor. To all his officials he assigned a suitable salary, ordering them to place themselves at the service of all without distinction of persons, to expedite business promptly, and never to receive presents. He especially exacted that they should not demand any payment for their services, except with regard to certain deeds, in connection with which it was always customary to take a fee for the writing, sealing, and signing thereof. He furthermore examined the tariff of these charges and lowered it as far as was possible, in conformity with the decree of the Council of Trent: thus he reduced the fee for letters of ordination from eighteenpence to sixpence.†

We have seen that the Saint insisted that amongst his officials there should be no exercise of favouritism or acceptance of persons. His dependents might have been justified if, speaking literally, they had accused him of being the first to break this rule. Yet it was only in the letter that he broke it, in order more perfectly to observe its spirit. For he sent orders to the priests and religious of the town to send to him for confession and consolation, not only the poor and unhappy, but even those amongst the people whose maladies and bodily condition made their presence an offence to their fellows. It was for the sake of these people that he once more chose his confessional near the door of the cathedral on the gospel side of the building. "They are my chosen sheep," he would say. "I want them for my own, for they are ordinarily the most abandoned and lonely, more destitute than others of the guidance and consolation so necessary to their condition. It is my duty to make their acquaintance and to provide for all their needs, both spiritual and temporal." And he carried out his intentions with such love and goodwill that he soon became known as the special father of these unfortunates.*

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* Hamon quotes C. A. de S. (see l. v, p. 345), but the last sentence is not given by this author.

† Hamon quotes De Cambis, Tom. I, p. 443.

Similarly, with regard to those who came to the house, he gave his servants orders that, no matter how repulsive or worthy of suspicion his callers might be, they were always to be treated kindly and to be brought into his presence. One day, when he entered a room where some candidates for ordination were being examined, he saw through the window that one of his servants was sending away a poor woman, who had evidently called to see the Bishop. Francis immediately went down and spoke to her, listening patiently to her complaints against a certain nobleman, who was persecuting her. He consoled her and promised his assistance. A short time afterwards he fulfilled his word. He had an interview with the nobleman in question, judged that the woman's complaints were justified, and constrained him to leave her henceforward in peace.†

The day after his official entry into Annecy, which took place on December 14, the Bishop began his episcopal duties by preaching to the people. He spoke to them about the coming feast of Christmas, and admonished them as to the preparation which they ought to make on the approach of such a solemnity. Once more, as during the first moments of his consecration, it was evident that his whole being was borne towards the ecstatic state, and that both mind and tongue were under the dominating influence of the Spirit of God. It was during one of these sublime moments that, carried beyond himself by his vehement desire to exalt the divine mercy, he related the wonderful things which God had effected within him on the day of his consecration. It was manifestly the divine will that, by means of this sacred exaltation, he should be induced to reveal to the world secrets which it would otherwise never have known: it was for the good of his people. As to the Saint, when he came to himself and realized the things of which he had spoken, he was filled with confusion, and bitterly reproached himself for what he considered to be an infringement of the virtue of humility.‡

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* *Année de S. F. de S.*, Jan. 9 and Feb. 28.

† Hamon quotes deposition of Dumont.

‡ C. A. de S., l. v, p. 341. Hamon quotes *La Rivière*, p. 260.

During the next few days he was occupied with various affairs—the organization of his household, letters to M. de Bérulle and one of the state councillors, and business with regard to the Holy House of Thonon. On December 21 he held his first ordination. It was on this day also that he heard of an infringement of the right of asylum. A Spanish soldier had been seized in the church of Faverges, where he had taken refuge. The Bishop immediately issued orders that the man should be taken back to the church by his captors, unless they wished to incur the penalty of excommunication.* It was probable that in this matter Francis was forced to act against his own personal idea of the fitness of things by the law, as it then existed. Writing on this subject in 1604 he says to M. d'Albigny: "Your desire that soldiers may be taken from consecrated precincts, in order that they may be punished in accordance with their deserts, is very just and very suitable for the preservation of public order. I have had so much trouble for not having permitted it, that I certainly have reason for my own part to wish that the laws about the immunity of churches might be moderated for this purpose. It is, nevertheless, not for me to do it, who am only a subject." He ends by saying that he has written to the Nuncio about the matter.†

On the night of December 22, 1602, there took place the celebrated *escalade* of Geneva. The conquest of this city, which had formerly belonged to the rulers of Savoy, had always been one of the strongest ambitions of Charles Emmanuel, and he now hoped to achieve it by a surprise attack during a time of apparent peace. That attack was nearly a success. His troops, under the command of the Frenchman D'Albigny, managed to obtain a footing on the walls: but so vigorous was the resistance of the citizens, once they were aware of their danger, that in a short time they had repulsed the invaders, destroyed the scaling ladders with artillery, and taken prisoners those who had been so unfortunate as to gain a temporary success. These prisoners, though they had only surrendered on the promise of their lives, were hanged the next morning. The result of this failure was that the Duke of Savoy, to avoid further trouble, was forced to conclude a humiliating peace with his bitterest enemies.

It is not certain how far Francis de Sales was cognisant of the preparations against Geneva. The need for secrecy was so great that probably only those actually concerned in the expedition were admitted to an intimate knowledge of the Duke's plans. But it is very likely that the Bishop had some general inkling of what was happening. In his Life of President Favre M. Mugnier quotes Ducis as saying: "If we are to credit a Life of Marshal Lesdiguières, the Duke of Savoy had invited the new Bishop to celebrate the feast of Christmas in the Cathedral of Geneva."* The necessary church furnishings had even been brought into Savoy from Turin. At any rate, it is very probable that, if Francis de Sales knew about the expedition, he would have approved of it in general as a sacred crusade against the enemies of the Church, who had unjustly taken possession of his Cathedral, and who were energetically concerned in the spread of heresy. Whether the Bishop would have sanctioned the expedition in all its details we cannot say.

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* *Journal* (Gonthier), p. 14.

† E.N., Tom. XII, Lettre CCXXII, p. 281.

It was probably during the month of January, 1603, that Francis wrote to the Abbess of Montmartre, giving her advice about the ruling of her house. This lady, Marie de Beauvilliers, had taken the habit of St Benedict at the early age of twelve in the Abbey of Beaumont. Twelve years later she became the Abbess of Montmartre, and devoted herself to the difficult task of restoring the ancient spirit of her house, which had suffered like many others during the troubled times of the religious wars. The Saint impresses on her the necessity of tact and gentleness in a task rendered all the more difficult by her own youthfulness. After remarking that he sees the door opening to her work of reformation, he goes on: "Only I beg you, Madame (beseeching your pardon for the simpleness and confidence I use towards you), that, inasmuch as this door is narrow and difficult to pass, you would take the trouble and patience to lead your Sisters through it one after the other, for I do not think it will be at all possible to crowd them through in a hurry. Some there are who cannot go as quickly as the others. It will be necessary to show consideration for those who are old: they are unable to re-adapt themselves easily; they are no longer supple, for the tendons of their minds, like those of their bodies, have already stiffened. The care which you devote to this holy work must be gentle, gracious, compassionate, simple, and even-tempered. Your youth and, it seems to me, your own disposition make this necessary: for severity is not becoming in the young. And believe me, Madame, the most perfect care is that which most closely resembles the care God has for us—which is a care full of tranquillity and gentleness, which in its greatest activity is yet devoid of all emotion, and which, being but one in itself, condescends to all things and makes itself all in all."† The Abbess had the happiness of seeing her work accomplished, and, after ruling her house for sixty years, died in 1657, full of years and holiness.

Towards the end of January the Bishop began a campaign against abuses connected with St Valentine's day. It was the custom that on February 14 the young people of both sexes should gather together, and that the names of those present should be written in gold letters upon laurel leaves or slips of satin. These were placed in urns. Then, by means of a system of drawing, the names of the young men were matched with those of the girls. The two people thus drawn together contracted for the rest of the year an alliance of particular friendship. The gold-lettered tickets were worn as a sort of talisman on heart or arm. It became the business of the swain during that year to serve his valentine in every possible way, to escort her at balls, to accompany her on walks, to go with her to their various social functions, and to show his devotion by the offering of suitable presents. A good deal of this might have been innocent enough: unfortunately, experience proved that it often led to the breaking down of those *convenances* which are the safeguard of good conduct. In Annecy there was a particular harm in the custom, because its observance had even spread amongst married people, and not infrequently led to jealousies and quarrels between man and wife. Accordingly, in order to take the matter in time, the Bishop attacked the custom in a vehement sermon which he preached on January 26, 1603. Naturally there were many who took umbrage at this action. This was only to be expected, and the Saint was not discouraged: he returned to the charge on the following Sundays. Not content with exhortation, he determined to use the power of authority: he proceeded to ban by public edict the custom of taking valentines, and called upon the secular arm to help him in enforcing his decree. This last action roused a vigorous storm of opposition: the Bishop became the object of considerable resentment, many a murmur was heard against him, and a good deal of malicious wit was directed against both his crusade and himself. Francis was far too strong a character to allow this to disconcert him. "Let them talk," he answered to those who spoke to him about it. "We are stronger than they are, for we have on our side God and God's friends. We shall have no valentines this year, but we shall have order, peace, and morality." In order to supplant the custom which he wished to destroy, the Bishop informed his people that he himself would undertake to supply them with valentines. In fulfilment of this promise, he sent round to every family a number of tickets, bearing the names of different saints, and, accompanying the name, some striking sentence from Scripture or from the writings of the fathers. These tickets were drawn by lot, and the saint indicated by the ticket became the patron for that year, while the quotation was to be used as a motto or rule of conduct. Another pious custom, which he encouraged amongst his people, was that of making the sign of the cross whenever the clock was heard to strike the hour, and to utter a short prayer—a few words only—in honour of Christ's Passion: if a person had had the misfortune to fall into sin during the last sixty minutes, an act of contrition was to be added to this prayer and a resolution to be more watchful in the future.

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* Mugnier, *Hist. du Président Favre*, p. 272 note.

† E.N., Tom. XII, Lettre CLXXV, p. 171.

On all the Lenten Fridays which followed the feast of St Valentine the Bishop preached to the members of the Confraternity of the Holy Cross, and it became his practice to speak to his people, either by way of sermon, instruction or conference, whenever opportunity allowed it. On February 22 he held another ordination in the church of St Francis, on which occasion he raised his brother, Jean François de Sales, to the priesthood. During Holy Week, in addition to the usual pontifical ceremonies, Francis followed the procession of the Confraternity of the Holy Cross on Maundy Thursday to all the altars of repose in Annecy, wearing the rough tunic of the brotherhood. On returning to the cathedral, he preached to the members an eloquent sermon on the Passion.*

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* Gonthier, p. 18.

CHAPTER XVII*

(1603)

Troubled state of the country—Marriage of Louis de Sales—Francis takes the oath of fidelity to the Duke at Turin—Visits B. Juvenal Ancina at Saluzzo—Returns to Annecy—Disputes between the two chapters—Settlement—Institution of catechisms—Letter to the Bishop-elect of Dol—Francis goes to Gex—Attempt to poison him—He goes to Thonon—Episode of the storm—Conversion of Baron d'Yvoire—Reform of the Canons Regular at Sixt—Visit to Rambride—The diocesan synod at Annecy—The Bishop's care for his clergy—Pamphlet on Confession—Letter to the Pope—Failures and successes in Gex

IT is evident that a considerable time elapsed, after the *escalade* of Geneva, before peace was concluded between Savoy and the city, and that during this period the people who lived in its neighbourhood were in constant danger of counter-attacks. In a letter to M. Charles d'Albigny, dated from Annecy, March 29, Francis has to write on behalf of one of his priests. "I am forced, sir," says the Bishop, "to make you another petition—in favour of a poor parish priest of Ternier, whose name is Burgiat, curé of Beaumont, and who has been made a prisoner of war by the men of Geneva, so that if any treaty be made in which it will be possible for him to obtain his freedom by exchange or by some other means, you would be so kind as to do him this charity. I assure you that such a favour would be most pleasing in the eyes of our good God, for this priest was captured without any fault on his part and was performing his duties in the most laudable manner."†

The advent of spring had now made the roads more practicable for travelling than they usually were during the winter months, and the Saint had to bethink himself of a journey into Piedmont, for the purpose of taking his oath of fidelity to the Duke of Savoy. Leaving Annecy on March 31, he arrived next day at the château of Crest, near Montmélian, where he was expected for the marriage of his brother Louis with Claudine de Pingon, the daughter of Baron de Cusy. Though he would never sacrifice the duties of his calling for the sake of his family ties, yet he was always glad when circumstances made it possible for him to be present on such an occasion. He must have been particularly happy to do so in this case, because

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* Hamon, l. iv, chap. ii.

† E.N., Tom. XII, Lettre CLXXX, p. 178.

Louis had ever been his favourite brother. He had already assisted at the drawing up of the contract and the ceremony of the betrothal: now, on April 2, he completed this work of preparation by presiding at the wedding and blessing the union, which bore every good augury for a happy future. The next day, in company with the newly-married couple, he made a pilgrimage to our Lady of Myans.*

Continuing on his way, he arrived at Turin towards the end of the month, and accomplished the object of his journey on May 1 at Mondovi, where he took his oath of fidelity to the Duke and the young Prince of Piedmont.† Charles Emmanuel received him in the most honourable manner, acceding to all his requests and granting him certain privileges for the inhabitants of Chablais, Ternier, and Gaillard. The Bishop did not stay at the Court any longer than was necessary. Setting out on his return journey he made his way to Carmagnola, a little town of the diocese of Saluzzo, where he was to meet the Ordinary, Blessed Juvenal Ancina. It will be remembered that he had made the acquaintance of this saintly Oratorian in Rome.

Scarcely had he arrived at the hotel, when one of the chief citizens of the place came and called upon him. This gentleman told Francis that, whereas there was not an inmate of the town who would not have willingly lodged so illustrious a bishop in his very heart, yet it had been the speaker's own ambition and good fortune to be able to offer their guest the hospitality of his house. Francis, having accepted this charming invitation, proceeded afterwards to call upon the Bishop of Saluzzo. It happened that the day after our Saint's arrival was May 3, the feast not only of the Finding of the True Cross, but of St Juvenal, the name-saint of Mgr. Ancina. In honour of this double event there was solemn pontifical Mass, during which Blessed Juvenal Ancina requested his guest to preach to the people. Francis consented to do so, and began his sermon in Italian. During the *Ave* at the end of the exordium, however, a priest came to him with a message from the Bishop begging him to preach in French, inasmuch as, owing to the fact that the country had been so long under the dominion of France, the people understood that language better than their own. Francis, in obedience to this request, continued his sermon in French, preaching upon the Holy Cross with such eloquence and fervour that the people scarcely knew which to admire the more—his learning or his manifest sanctity. As the two Bishops left the Church, Blessed Juvenal Ancina turned to his friend, and in allusion to the latter's name, said: "*Tu vere sal es*" (Truly you are the salt of the earth). Francis with ready wit answered by playing upon his host's episcopal title: "*Tu sal et lux es: ego vero*

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* Hamon, Tom. I, p. 477. † *Journal* (Gonthier), p. 18.

neque sal neque lux" (It is you who are both salt and light: I, however, am neither the one nor the other).*

From Carmagnola Francis made a pilgrimage to our Lady of Mondovi, and from there returned to Annecy for the feast of Whitsunday.

When he reached home, he found himself obliged to turn his attention to the settlement of two long-standing differences between the Bishop of Geneva and his chapter on the one side and the chapter of the collegiate church of our Lady at Annecy on the other. The first difference came from the refusal of the Canons of the collegiate church to supply the Ordinary on certain ceremonial occasions with ministers or servers of canonical dignity. This may seem a not very important matter, but Francis, whilst seeking no honour for himself, was jealous as to the rights of the episcopacy. He held it in great reverence himself, and demanded for it a similar reverence from others. In the present matter he decided to act with firmness. Although the Dean of this chapter, François de Menthon de Lornay, had been one of his fellow-students at Paris and Padua, and belonged, moreover, to one of the most influential and aristocratic families in Savoy, the Bishop wrote him the following severe letter, dated May 27, 1603:

"VERY REVEREND DEAN,†

"I command, absolutely and without reply, that your cantors, the subdeacon whom you shall give me, and the thurifer shall be Canons, in spite of all your customs, since those of my Church are of that rank. I give this command to your chapter and to you, in virtue of holy obedience and *sub poena excommunicationis latae sententiae.*

"In testimony of which I sign these present.

"FRANCIS DE SALES,
"*Bishop of Geneva.*'

The second difference was one concerning a question of precedence between the two chapters, that of the collegiate church of our Lady and that of the cathedral church of St Peter, which latter, in company with the Bishop, had been forced to take refuge in Annecy, when Catholicity was driven from the city of Geneva in 1535. The Chapter of the collegiate church had, for a long time, fulfilled the duties of parish priest and clergy at Annecy, and consequently, prior to 1535, had always had the right of carrying the Blessed Sacrament and occupying the place of honour in the procession of Corpus Christi. When the cathedral chapter came to Annecy, it claimed the right of precedence in these processions, as being the premier chapter of the diocese: the collegiate chapter opposed this claim on the grounds that a man is master in his own home, and that the Canons of Geneva were, after all, only refugee strangers in Annecy. Once again it may seem an unimportant matter: but the best of men never quarrel so whole-heartedly as when their consciences assure them that they are defending the honour of their order rather than their own personal dignity. Anyhow, this quarrel was of sufficiently long standing. It had been carried on during the reigns of former bishops, particularly under Mgr. Justiniani, during whose episcopacy the metropolitan Archbishop of Vienne had given judgement in favour of the cathedral chapter. Cardinal Caraffa had also decided the question, when acting for the Holy Father, in the same sense. The collegiate chapter, however, was not satisfied, and during the time of Mgr. de Granier, Francis de Sales, in his position of Provost, had found himself obliged to insist strongly upon the rights of his chapter. Now that he was Bishop, and the prospect of a return to Geneva was more remote than ever, he felt that the question ought to be settled once and for all. On Trinity Sunday he announced from the pulpit of the cathedral that on the following Thursday he himself would carry the Blessed Sacrament in procession, and that he would be immediately attended by the Canons of his chapter. This decision offended the Canons of the collegiate church, and they immediately laid a complaint before the syndics of the city: then both Canons and syndics sought an interview with the Bishop. Admitted into his presence, they protested to him that the Canons of the collegiate church, in so far as they held the rank of parish priest in the city, ought to hold precedence over the Canons of Geneva, who were strangers; and not only thus but that, in addition, it was their right, as parish priests, to carry the Blessed Sacrament, and that his predecessors in the episcopacy had always left them this honour. To these claims Francis made a dignified and firm reply: " I would never have imagined it possible," he said, " that you should address me in such terms. There is no place in my diocese in which my Canons and myself can be regarded as strangers. The fact that my predecessors, by reason of their age or their infirmities, have not exercised certain functions of their office can assuredly in no way deprive me of the least of my rights: and since, by the grace of God, I am full of strength and health, why should I not carry in procession the body of my Saviour and my Master? Understand that I am your Bishop, and that I intend to exercise all the functions of my charge; understand, moreover, that the Canons of my cathedral are everywhere my assistants, and that I have the right to be attended by them in all the ceremonies of the divine Office. The order that I have decided upon shall be followed. It is free to you to make an appeal afterwards, if you think that your rights have been contravened." "Very well," answered the deputation, "we appeal in the matter to the metropolitan, and we will also inform the Duke of Nemours of the whole of this affair." The procession took place in the order indicated by the Bishop; but, in order not to prejudice their rights in any way, the Canons of the collegiate church abstained from taking any part in the ceremony.

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* C. A. de S., l. v, p. 346.

† The letter begins "Monsieur le Doyen." I have given it its modern English equivalent.

‡ E.N., Tom. XII, Lettre CLXXXIII, p. 186.

When the matter was referred to the Duke of Nemours, that prince examined it very thoroughly, took the advice of the most learned lawyers in Paris, and also consulted Antoine Favre, the president of his council of Génevois. The Duke eventually decided upon a solution which, he hoped, would be satisfactory to both parties. He decided that the Canons of the cathedral should walk on one side of the procession while the Canons of the collegiate church should walk on the other, both chapters being thus placed, as it were, upon a level. This was the method observed in Paris when the chapter of Notre Dame joined in procession with the collegiate churches of the Holy Chapel and of St Genevieve. The Saint, however, was unwilling to accept this compromise, which did not settle the vital question of the status of his cathedral chapter throughout the diocese. It may be pointed out that the peculiar circumstances in which both the Bishop and his chapter existed, as exiles driven from their own city of Geneva and obliged to seek refuge in another part of the diocese, made it all the more important that their authority should be recognized, and that they should endure no loss of prestige by reason of their exile. Accordingly, Francis wrote to the Duke of Nemours, pointing out that there was no real parallel between the situation in Annecy and that in Paris. For the Canons of the churches of the Holy Chapel and of St Genevieve had been made independent and granted cathedral rights by royal privilege, approved by the Holy See: but the collegiate church of Annecy was absolutely dependent upon the Bishop and subject to him, and, during vacancies of the see, was subject to the cathedral chapter or to the Vicar-General appointed by that chapter. This point settled the matter in the eyes of the Duke of Nemours, and he wrote to the collegiate chapter giving his decision against them. But even then these good Canons would not submit, persisting in their appeal to the metropolitan, and, in the meanwhile, abstaining from appearing in the procession. The Bishop was unwilling to resort to drastic measures, and allowed them a full year in which to conform themselves to the verdict of the appeal, which they themselves had instituted. Finally, taking cognizance of the scandal of their absence, he fixed the order of the procession by a public edict, the breaking of which involved the penalty of excommunication *ipso facto*. This edict, however, was not to prejudice in any way the appeal made to the metropolitan. By this act the Bishop obliged the Canons to assist, not only at the procession, but also at the High Mass which preceded it, enjoining upon them to take their part in the chanting of the Office and in the ceremonies.

It seems well to give the termination of this affair at once, though it was not settled in a definite and amicable manner for some time. The Canons of the collegiate church found themselves obliged to obey the Bishop's edict: but they remained unpacified, and there existed a good deal of feeling between the two bodies. Eventually, in the year 1605, the Saint gathered together in his presence the Canons of both churches, gave them a pressing exhortation on the need of fraternal unity, and urged upom them a definite reconciliation. By this time the two chapters, both composed of really good and virtuous men, must have been heartily tired of the whole dispute, and all those present at the Bishop's discourse affirmed that settlement and reconciliation were what they themselves most earnestly desired. It was eventually agreed, by a friendly transaction between the two parties, that the cathedral chapter should have precedence over that of the collegiate church, but that by way of compensation and in sign of fraternity certain honorary privileges would be granted to the latter. In order that all misunderstanding should be avoided in future, the Bishop had this agreement, with the enumeration of the various rights and privileges accorded, drawn up in full and precise detail. He then gave it the sanction of his own authority. Thus came to an end this long and humiliating dispute. Francis congratulated the Canons most warmly upon its termination. "This concord amongst our ecclesiastics will bring about a new increase in the piety of the laity; as for myself, I seem to have found a new health therein, and am feeling stronger and more robust, so that I can enter upon the coming visitation of my diocese with fervour and joy of heart."*

It is quite evident from a letter written by Francis to M. Nicolas de Soulfour on June 15, 1603, that during the last six months the political situation had caused great anxiety to the Bishop. "We have no news to give you," he writes, "but the same old miseries, amongst which the greatest are those which concern the abandonment of some hundred churches in the neighbourhood of Geneva."† Ever since the failure of the *escalade* the Genevans had continued to make reprisals against the neighbouring Catholics, sallying forth from the city at any moment. Saint-Julien, Thonon, and Evian were either actually attacked or seriously threatened. When peace negotiations failed to come to an issue in April, the attacks of the Calvinists became still more daring: a certain number of the clergy were taken prisoners, and others were forced to fly from their posts by fear of a similar fate.* Nevertheless, in spite of such commotions, the Bishop went on with the organization of his diocese. One of the first external acts of his rule had been the institution of catechism classes. These consisted of elementary instruction in the dogmatic and moral teachings of the Church, communicated to the people, not by sustained and elaborate discourses, but by clear and simple explanations, given in homely language, accompanied by familiar illustrations, varied by means of questions put to the children, and repeated under different forms, until they were thoroughly fixed in the memories of the listeners. The Saint was convinced, in spite of the criticisms of the so-called elect, that this form of evangelization was the most profitable of all, not only for the poor, the youthful, and the ignorant, but for the rich, the old, and the learned. It is, indeed, even in these days, a common thing to hear grown-up people, who have begun to attend catechism classes, confessing that no sermons they ever heard had so convinced them of their own ignorance, nor had given them such a thorough grasp of religion as these apparently simple instructions. It was on June 23, 1603,† that the Bishop inaugurated this institution in the church of St Dominic by a solemn High Mass, which was attended by the chapter of the diocese and by a huge crowd of the townspeople. Preaching on this occasion, he demonstrated to his congregation the necessity and the advantages of catechetical instruction, announced that catechism classes would be held thenceforward every Sunday, and finished with a moving exhortation, in which he urged the people of every age and condition to second him in his work both by advice and personal example.

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* Charles Auguste gives a very full account of this dispute, with the arguments on both sides and the details of the settlement, in l. v, p. 348 *et seq.*, and l. vi, p. 406 *et seq.* See also *Année*, Oct. 12.

† E.N., Tom. XII, Lettre CLXXXVII, p. 197.

As each Sunday came round, this first invitation was renewed in a striking manner. Through the streets of Annecy there passed a young man, clothed in a purple tunic, bearing on back and breast an escutcheon, enshrining the names of *Jesus* and *Mary*. As he passed along the ways, he rang a bell to attract the attention of the passers-by, and gave them an invitation to come to the catechism. "You will learn there," he cried out, "the path to heaven."

In order to give a good example to both priests and people, the Bishop decided to give catechetical instruction himself, and he made of this so binding a rule that he never dispensed himself from it, unless his other occupations made it utterly impossible. On these latter occasions he delegated his task to the dignitaries of the cathedral or to the most capable teachers amongst his clergy.

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* E.N., vol. xii, p. 198 note.

† *Journal* (Gonthier), p. 20

The Saint's historians have delighted to describe the method which he employed in instructing his little ones. When all the children were gathered close to him, the boys on one side and the girls on the other, he would give the sign for the singing of the *Veni Creator Spiritus;* then he would begin by making them recite a portion of the catechism, either of Bellarmine or of St Peter Canisius, which he had set them to learn on the last occasion. After this recitation he would explain with admirable clearness the parts which the children had just learnt. "I had the happiness," writes Father de la Rivière, "of assisting at this wonderful catechism. Never have I gazed upon aught like it. This really good and loving father was seated on a kind of throne, raised upon a few steps; the army of children surrounded him. It was an unparalleled delight to listen to the ease and adaptability with which he explained the rudiments of our faith; on every occasion the richest comparisons rose to his lips; he would look at his little people, and his little people would look at him: he became a child amongst them, in order to form within them the perfect man according to Jesus Christ." After having explained some point of doctrine, the Bishop would strive to find out whether it had been thoroughly understood, and this he did by interrogating the children one after the other, putting what was really the same question under different forms. If the explanation had not been perfectly grasped, he would take it up again in a different manner, illustrating it by new examples or anecdotes, until he had fully accomplished his object. He spared neither time nor pains in this labour, and displayed an untiring patience with those who were stupid and backward. He very seldom found fault with the children or rebuked them, but preferred to use the method of encouragement. From time to time he would give his pupils small prizes—medals, pictures, statues, rosaries or prayer-books. At the end of the catechism he would make the children sing hymns, sometimes of his own composition, or metrical versions of the Psalms in French; then he would distribute leaflets, written in his own hand, on which were found the questions and answers for the next lesson. So admirably did he exercise this ministry of instruction that large crowds of adults attended his catechisms, people of all ranks and capabilities, who found in the Saint's treatment of the truths of Christianity just what they needed either in the mere instruction given or in the edification and grace accompanying his words.

Mme. de Boisy, his saintly mother, always made it her rule to attend these catechisms when she was at Annecy. One day the Bishop complained to her that she caused him distractions, when he saw her coming with all these little children to hear the very catechism which she herself had taught to him. "My son," she answered, "I taught you the letter of the catechism. But your lips reveal to me the meaning, the inner essence of our sacred mysteries, with which I was very badly acquainted."*

Eventually, so great was the number of people who were attracted to these instructions, that it became necessary to divide them into three classes, which were apportioned to three chapels in St Dominic's, and placed under the care of distinguished and eloquent priests. Even this was not sufficient, and before long catechisms were also founded in the churches of Notre Dame and of St John. Naturally, the Bishop's zeal about the catechisms was not without critics, especially amongst people of the type which we label superior. "What a queer idea of the Bishop's," they said, "to level down well-instructed people to the same plane as the ignorant, and to want everybody to become a child once more." Francis, on hearing of this, contented himself at first with gently quoting the words of the Gospel. "If you do not become as little children, you will not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Eventually, however, noticing that these gibes were hindering a certain number of people from coming to the catechisms, he dealt more severely with such critics, reprimanded them for their strictures, and declared that if persons of his acquaintance continued to make trouble by their remarks, he would refuse to receive them at his house. This had the desired effect. Doubtless, several of the people concerned had meant to exercise their wit rather than to do any harm, and when some of these recognized what importance the Bishop attached to the new work, they themselves became as regular as any in their attendance at the catechisms, and so helped by their example to nullify whatever harm had been done by the thoughtlessness of their words.

From time to time the Bishop would stir up the piety and interest of the children by religious services, organized specially for their benefit. On two Sundays in the year they were led in procession through the town, accompanied by priests, who helped them to sing their hymns or recite their rosary, and followed by the Bishop himself in mitre and cope.

It was only natural that this work should bring about the most affectionate relations between the Bishop and the children of the town. When he passed through the streets, they would run towards him from all directions, and, drawing up on either side, would sometimes scarcely leave him a free passage. They all wanted to get his blessing, to kiss his hand or his robe, and they would follow him until they obtained the favour they sought. He, on his part, happy in such surroundings, gave himself up to all of them, a word to one, a touch of his hand to another, and took no heed that his progress was thereby seriously delayed. Sometimes the personages of his suite would become impatient at the importunity of the youngsters, but these zealous people he would check, and never did he allow the children to be driven away from him. "Let them come," he would say; "they are my little people."*

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* Neither Hamon nor Pérennès give their authority for this.

One day, when they had followed him to the entrance of a convent, he forgot to shut the door of the parlour into which he was introduced. When the Sister expressed the fear that he would take harm from the draught, he got up to close this door; but having noticed the crowd of children gathered within the entrance to the convent, he returned to his chair without effecting his purpose. "There is a group of little ones," he said, "who are watching me so affectionately that I have not the heart to shut the door in their faces."† The Saint always showed the same kindness and patience when the mothers or nurses brought their babies to him to beg his blessing upon them. He would play with them gently, showing them his bright golden cross and putting it to their little lips that they might kiss it. Not unfrequently his blessing was the occasion of a miracle, and the child was freed henceforth from some ailment that had afflicted it.

The Bishop was anxious that the whole of his diocese should have a share in the already manifest benefits which accrued from the catechisms. Accordingly, during the following year, he ordered all his priests to give this kind of instruction to their people every Sunday before vespers. In summer it was to last for two hours! In the instruction which he gave them on this subject he desired that the time of the catechism should be announced by the ringing of the bell; that at the entrance of the church someone should be stationed, whose duty it was to see that all made the sign of the cross and the genuflexion before the Blessed Sacrament in the proper manner; that part of the time should be occupied by a dialogue between two of the children, one taking the questions and the other the answers; that the more capable children should be chosen for this office, and that they should be placed in a conspicuous place where all could see them; that the children should be interrogated about the explanations already given on the previous occasion, so as to see if they had been paying attention and understanding what was said to them; that, at the end, the priest should make a short recapitulation of all that had been said, so as to fix it all the more firmly in the minds of the people; that prizes should be given, such as medals, pictures and rosaries, to those who had shown the greatest knowledge, and who had, at the same time, answered with becoming modesty; and finally, that the names of the absent should be carefully noted down, and the proceedings concluded with a practical exhortation on some matter of piety and good living.‡

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* Hamon quotes dep. of Antoine d'Eglise and Recueil de la Mère Greffier.

† Recueil de la mère Greffier. D. Jean de S. F. de S., p. 437.

‡ Opuscules (Blaise, 1821), p. 275.

Francis recommended this work of catechizing not only to the parish priests and curates, but also to the non-beneficed clergy, whenever suitable opportunity for such presented itself. He gave them holograph letters, signed with his seal, authorizing them to instruct young people throughout the diocese, but always with the consent of the parish priest. It was impossible to give him greater pleasure than was afforded him by the knowledge that a priest was devoting himself to this ministry. "I asked him one day," said the Abbé de Mouxy in his testimony for the beatification, "to grant to the choir-boys of the cathedral, whom I was catechizing, the same indulgences as were accorded to the general catechism." "Oh!" he answered, "I grant them to you most willingly." Then, taking me in his arms, he added, "And since you are catechizing the little children, you are my well-beloved son."

We think it well to mention here a letter which was written on June 3, the account of which M. Hamon defers till later in his book. A friend of his, Antoine de Revol, had been nominated for the bishopric of Dol, in Brittany. Francis had engaged to obtain for him at Rome the bulls for his consecration. These arrived from the Eternal City, probably at the end of May or the very beginning of June, and the Saint forwarded them to M. de Revol with a letter, in which friendship is seen in its highest expression, evidenced, not merely by empty compliments, but by the bestowal of wise advice for the future conduct of the new bishop. He points out that the reception of the episcopacy involves a radical change. "It is necessary," he wrote, "that you should become altogether different, both with regard to the life within and the life without: and in order to make this great and solemn change, it will be necessary to inflict upon your mind a complete upheaval and to turn it up thoroughly in every direction." He advised his friend to take counsel of men eminent for virtue and learning, and amongst several suggestions mentions in particular M. de Bérulle. "He is a man," wrote the Saint, "to whom God has given much, and whom it is impossible to frequent without great profit. He is just what I would desire to be myself. I have never known a mind which appealed to me like his: I have never seen nor met the like."*

Francis then goes on to recommend to the bishop-elect a number of authors and works which were to be read, some for his personal spirituality and others for enlightenment in the work of his charge. Amongst the former were the works of Louis of Granada, the Spiritual Letters of Blessed John of Avila, the Confessions of St Augustine, and the Letters of St Jerome; amongst the latter were the *Moralium Libri* and the *Regulae Pastoralis Liber* of St Gregory, the Letters and the Book of Consideration of St Bernard, the Decrees of the

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* E.N., Tom. XII, Lettre CLXXXIV, p. 187.

Church of Milan, the Life of Saint Charles Borromeo, and the Decrees and Catechism of the Council of Trent.

"I would yet add two more words," writes the Saint. "The one is that it is of infinite importance for you to receive your consecration with a great reverence and a proper disposition as well as with a complete apprehension of the greatness of the mystery. . . .

"The other point is that I wish you a great confidence and a particular devotion with regard to the Guardian Angel and Protector of your diocese, for it is a great consolation to have recourse to him in all the difficulties of our office. All the fathers and theologians are in agreement that bishops, in addition to their own particular Angel, given to them for themselves, have also the assistance of another, granted to them for their office and charge. You ought to have great confidence in both, and, by frequently invoking them, gain a certain familiarity with them, and especially, in regard to your work, with the Angel of the diocese, as also with the Patron Saint of your cathedral. . . ."

Francis concludes by exhorting his friend to be constant in the work of preaching. After quoting the Council of Trent on the point, he continues: "Do not do it in order to become a great preacher, but simply because it is your duty and the will of God. The fatherly sermon of a bishop is worth all the artistry in the elaborate sermons of preachers of another type. It needs but little in the case of a bishop to preach well, for his sermons ought to be of things necessary and useful, not of those that are curious and recherché; his words simple, not affected; his action fatherly and natural, without art or care. . . ."*

About the beginning of August, 1603, Francis turned his attention once more to the country of Gex. This was the part of his diocese which, it will be remembered, was under the dominion of France, and on behalf of which he had made his visit to Paris. Things were not going at all well in this province. Francis had, indeed, obtained from Henry IV leave to re-establish the exercise of the Catholic religion in several parishes, with the surrender of the benefices needed to furnish a living for the curés; he had, moreover, obtained a decree from the Parliament of Burgundy confirming the King's decision, but the Protestant ministers continued to occupy their pulpits throughout the district, preaching a hatred for Catholicity; they continued to receive the revenues of the promised benefices; and exerted themselves in a hundred ways to counteract the efforts of his zeal.

At the time of which we are speaking the Duke of Bellegarde, Governor of Burgundy, Bresse, Bugey, and Gex, happened to be at Belley, where he was joined by M. Janin, President of the Parliament of Dijon, and Baron de Lux, the King's lieutenant or viceroy in that province. Hearing of this, the Bishop hastened to Belley, in order to discuss with them the difficulties of the religious question and to obtain the proper execution of the royal decree as to the re-establishment of the Catholic religion. The people of the town, knowing his reputation for sanctity and learning, were delighted to welcome him, and promptly begged him to preach to them on the first opportunity. This he did on August 10. The law officers took advantage of his presence to obtain from him a favour which they had sought for a long time. They desired him to appoint an official to judge ecclesiastical causes in that part of his diocese which was under French rule. Hitherto he had hesitated to grant their petition, for fear of injuring the unity of his diocesan administration. His presence in Belley gave him the opportunity of examining the matter at first hand with the reasons for and against: after a thorough investigation, he recognized the fitness of such an appointment, and a suitable official was solemnly installed by his authority with the approval of the civil powers.

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* E.N., Tom. XII, Lettre CLXXXIV, p. 187.

A nobleman of the district, the Seigneur de Maillans de Valloz, to whom a little son had been born a short time previously, begged the Saint to become the child's godfather. Francis, always anxious to place himself at the disposal of others, consented, and attended the boy's baptism in that quality on August 11. On the same day the Duke of Bellegarde requested the Saint to undertake the direction of his soul, made a general confession, and asked for a rule of life; he furthermore begged that Francis would look upon him henceforward as a son, to which the Bishop consented, remarking that the Duke should be to him as a Joseph because of the honour and gratitude which Francis owed to him, and as a Benjamin because of the love and appreciation in which he held him.*

It was only to be expected that the Duke and President Janin, holding the Bishop in such veneration, should do all they could to assist him in his mission. The former proposed to accompany him to Gex, in order to attend personally to the execution of the Parliament's decree. Eventually the Duke obtained for him all that was possible under the circumstances, amongst other things, the transference of all the revenues which the Protestant ministers had hitherto drawn from the ecclesiastical benefices of Gex, Farge and Asserens.

In the meanwhile two Calvinist gentlemen, supported by several other literary people—all of them members of the Duke's suite—asked Francis if he would hold a few conferences with them on the Catholic religion. To this the Bishop gladly consented, and these conferences ended as such discussions always did end, when the enquirers were sincere: the gentlemen became so convinced of the truth of the

* Pérennès, vol. ii, p. 114. *Année*, Août 11.

Catholic religion, that in a short time they made their solemn abjuration of Calvinism in the presence of all the nobility who happened at that time to be present at Gex.* The matter did not end there: for this example led to the conversion of several other people, whom Francis had the happiness of receiving into the Church.

These conversions, and the Bishop's success in his diplomatic mission, aroused the greatest discontent among the Calvinists. Some of these were driven so far by their anger that they actually engineered a plot for his assassination, and by means of bribes persuaded a wretched woman to put some poison in the food that was being prepared for him. After partaking of this food, the Bishop was seized with violent pains and vomiting, and in a short time was reduced to a very critical condition. Placing his confidence in God and in the intercession of Mary, he made a vow that, if he escaped the danger in which he found himself, he would make a pilgrimage on foot to our Lady of Thonon. Then, fearing to tempt God by refusing to take those natural remedies which are always at men's disposal, he sent for the doctors. These were not long in finding out what was wrong with their patient and promptly administered an antidote. Eventually the Saint regained his health and suffered no further ill-effects from this dastardly attempt on his life. Fearing that such a crime might lead to severity and reprisals against the Calvinists, he ensured silence on the part of all those who knew the facts, by commanding them to keep their lips closed until the matter had become ancient history.†

On his way back to Annecy the Bishop returned by way of the parish of Corbonod, near Seyssel, which he desired to visit. He was received with every token of respect by M. de Gornet, who commanded there in the King's name, and who, though not himself a Catholic, was able to appreciate all that was due to a man of such eminent probity and virtue.

At the beginning of September he accomplished the vow he had taken of making a pilgrimage to our Lady at Thonon. To walk fifteen leagues, during the heat of the late summer, in a mountainous country, would be a task sufficient for a man in the full possession of his health: to one who had just recovered from a serious illness and who suffered habitually from a kind of slow fever, it must have been the most severe of penances. On the outskirts of Thonon he was received by the syndics and principal townsmen with every mark of honour, and his entry into the town was a veritable triumph. His first visit was to the church of our Lady, there to fulfil his vow. He remained some time in prayer before the altar, thanking God and our Lady for his escape from death and begging the grace of heaven for his people of Thonon, that they might be strengthened and confirmed in the faith. During his stay in the town he devoted himself whole-heartedly to these people, who were so especially his own, rousing their faith, exhorting them to do God's work by good example, and to pass on to others the graces which had been so wonderfully bestowed upon themselves. A few of the Calvinists, who had continued to resist all efforts to convert them, now asked to hold with him a number of conferences, and when he granted their request, he had the consolation of winning over several of his former adversaries. Some, indeed, remained obstinately fixed in their Calvinistic creed, and seemed to acquire a new hatred as time went on. One day, when the Bishop was setting out in state to bless the cemetery of St Bon, the weather suddenly changed, and the sky became overcast by heavy clouds, the prelude to a furious storm which made all progress impossible. Some of the Calvinists immediately took advantage of this unfortunate state of affairs to mock at the Catholics and their religion. " See," they said, " how God declares himself against the Papists." " You are utterly wrong," exclaimed the Bishop, who overheard their remarks. " This storm, on the contrary, is only the effect of the rage of Satan, who is angry at seeing himself driven forth from these places by the Spirit of God." He then proceeded to offer up to heaven those prayers consecrated by the Church for use in time of tempest. Scarcely had he finished, when the storm died down as suddenly as it had risen, and the procession was able to pursue its way beneath the cheering influence of sun and blue sky.*

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* Dep. of François Favre

† Hamon quotes De Maupas, p. 232. See also *Annêe*, Août 13, and C. A. de S., l. v, p. 357.

But while the Bishop was working for the good of all his people in Thonon, it was upon the priests of the Holy House that he bestowed his greatest care. These were his favourite sons. All the time that he was not expending on outside matters he devoted to the members of this little community, encouraging them in their work and in their own spiritual progress by means both of public conferences and private interviews. He confirmed their institute by a new act of his authority, and left to them, as a mark of his appreciation and affection, the following note written in his own hand:

" Pope Clement VIII had established Francis de Sales, provost of the Church of Geneva, as prefect of the Holy House of our Lady of Compassion at Thonon. But the same Francis, having been made some time afterwards bishop and prince of Geneva, and thereby discharged from the office of prefect, has given, devoted, and consecrated himself entirely, of his own inclination and will, to this congregation, wishing with the utmost earnestness and ardour that devotion to the most august names of Jesus and Mary may spread from the church of Thonon to all the churches of his diocese—above all, into the city of Geneva, and wishing, indeed, that these holy names *may yield a sweet odour like cinnamon, and aromatical balm and the choicest myrrh.** Amen, amen."

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* C. A. de S., l. v, p. 359.

In the middle of September Francis left Thonon to go to Viuz en Salaz, a lordship possessed by the Bishop of Geneva and the only one then left to him by the Calvinists. Here on the twenty-third of the month he received the abjuration of Claude Forestier, Baron d'Yvoire. This gentleman had already in the past had several conferences with Francis de Sales, and, when defeated by the arguments of the latter, had excused himself on the ground that he was not well skilled in controversy, as he had been taught to devote more time to the use of his sword than to the resolution of theological difficulties: he expressed a wish to see the Bishop engaged in dispute with some of the Calvinist ministers, who would be in a position to answer him learnedly and to the point. To this the Bishop had answered: "And I, sir, give you every sort of liberty to go to Geneva, and on my behalf to invite the ministers to a dispute, or, if you like, to obtain for me a safe-conduct so that I may go to them." Thereupon Baron d'Yvoire had betaken himself to Geneva and urged the ministers to accept the challenge offered to them. The ministers, however, knew a good deal about the merits of Francis de Sales as a controversialist, and were not keen to accept the Baron's invitation. They said that their religion had no need of dispute, and that in any case the Papists only answered their arguments by the employment of sophistry. It is probable that our Baron, in the course of his career as a swordsman, may have had plenty of experience in judging the validity of the arguments for refusing a challenge. Like Baron d'Avully on a similar occasion, he came to the conclusion that Calvinism had not too much to say for itself when confronted by an able exponent of Catholic doctrine. He came, therefore, to Viuz with the object of making his submission to the Bishop of Geneva, and thenceforth practised the worship of the ancient religion with fervour and perseverance.

From Viuz the Saint went to Sixt. Here, amidst a wild mountainous country, there existed a monastery of Canons Regular of St Augustine. Although it had once been a place noted for the sanctity of its inmates, it had in course of time deteriorated, and the period of the religious wars had reduced its observance to a very parlous condition. In the year 1600 two of the Canons had rightly taken it upon themselves to report the state of affairs to headquarters, and Francis had been anxious for some time to see what he could do by way of remedying the abuses complained of. He arrived at Sixt on September 24. On the next day, after his Mass, he called the Canons together and declared to them that he had come to make an official visitation of their monastery, to enquire if their life was what it should be, and if they were faithful to the observance of their rule; he also wished to learn the condition of their house, of their property and finances; he reminded them that he had the power to do this as their Superior, that such was, according to immemorial custom, the prerogative of the Bishop of Geneva; nevertheless, if there were any amongst them who considered that they had reason to object to his jurisdiction, he begged them to speak and to reveal their objections. All the Canons answered that they recognized his right and were anxious neither to contest it nor to hinder him in its exercise. The Bishop then began to question the Abbot, and asked him, first of all, whether he was a titular or commendatory abbot. A commendatory abbot is one who, without being bound by the rule and often without residing in the house, had the right to receive a certain portion of the monastery revenues: the possibility of such a rank was part of a system of medieval graft. The titular abbot was the one who really governed the community, observed the rule, and was bound to residence. It turned out that the good Abbot of Sixt did not even know whether he was commendatory or titular: he asserted, however, that the Senate of Savoy had declared him commendatory and had forbidden him to correct the religious; consequently he did not wear the habit of the Order, and limited his activities to the administration of the temporalities. He averred that these were in a very bad state, and that, though the foundation made provision for twelve religious, he had felt bound, on account of the decline in the monastery's prosperity, to reduce the number to ten. When the Bishop went on to interrogate the Canons, they lost no time in contradicting the last statement of the Abbot. They asserted that the funds were amply sufficient for the maintenance of the twelve religious. Francis was astonished to learn that the Canons had none of them pronounced any vows, that their engagement to live according to the rule of St Augustine was purely implicit, and that, as a matter of fact, they did not know exactly what their obligations were. From such avowals as these, and from various other things which some of the Canons told him, he was soon able to get a true idea of the state of affairs and of the lamentable want of spirituality from which the house suffered. Nevertheless, he saw that he would need to go slowly and tactfully in his projects of reform. If, at first, he could get the Canons to observe faithfully the main rules of the religious life, it would be possible later on to introduce further improvements and ideals. Consequently, for the time, he only insisted on the following points: (i) The monastery should house twelve religious, according to the original institution; (ii) the Roman breviary should be used both for public and private recitation, and the Penitential Psalms should be recited before the Little Hours, according to the custom of the monastery, but no one was bound to this outside of choir, unless the rubrics of the breviary prescribed it; (iii) at least four Masses were to be celebrated daily, and on certain designated days five; (iv) the outer wall of the monastery, which ought to enclose the whole house, was to be repaired and built up: no woman was to be allowed entrance within this enclosure; (v) none of the religious should go out of the house without the permission of the prior, and the prior himself, should he wish to leave the monastery, was to notify the fact to the oldest of the Canons, though it was to be understood that this was not for the purpose of seeking permission.

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* Eccli. xxiv 20. C. A. de S., l. v, p. 360

The Canons received these regulations in silence and apparently in submission. Some, indeed, were genuinely glad to see this beginning of a reform. Others, however, and amongst these the Abbot, were only silent out of prudence and a certain respect for the Bishop: they really intended to appeal on the whole subject to the Senate of Savoy. In the meanwhile, Francis, thinking that all was well, made an examination of the buildings and church; from the latter he ordered the removal of a number of ancient pictures, half-destroyed by the wear of time, and not worthy of the sacredness of the building in which they were hung.*

Having completed his task, the Bishop was preparing to leave, when he received a visit from a deputation, representing some villagers of the district. It appeared that some time previous two enormous masses of rock, becoming detached from their places high up on the mountain-side, had come crashing down into the valley, carrying ruin and death in their passage. Fields were devastated, buildings destroyed, and both men and animals crushed to death. The loss was so great that ruin and famine stared the poor people in the face. In the midst of their trouble they had bethought themselves of appealing to the Chamber of Finance, not for actual help, but merely for exemption from their heavy taxation for a few years. The Chamber of Finance, however, had not ventured to take such a responsibility upon their own heads, and had told the poor villagers to appeal to the Duke of Savoy. This reply had thrown them into despair; for how were they, poor souls, to find a way to the seats of the mighty? At this juncture they had heard of the Bishop's arrival at the monastery, and they had immediately come to implore his help. They asked him if he would visit their village, and, verifying for himself the extent of the catastrophe, put their petition as their representative before the Duke of Savoy. The Bishop received the poor folk with every kindness, and agreed to their request. He set out with them on foot, by wild and rugged paths impracticable for a horse, and walked the long nine miles that led him to his destination. When he arrived at the place of the landslide, a hamlet named Rambride, he saw that the villagers had by no means exaggerated the extent of the catastrophe. The ruin worked in the midst of their homes had been appalling. He immediately set himself to console the poor mountaineers, spoke words of courage to arouse them from their despair, and promised to take up their cause as soon as he returned home. He kept his promise faithfully in his own energetic manner. Not content with writing to the Duke of Savoy, he also made application to the Marquis de Lullin and the Chancellor, begging them to use their influence with the Prince. His industry was rewarded with success, and after a certain amount of worry he was able to obtain for his villagers the relief they desired. On leaving Sixt, Francis returned to Thonon, where, on September 29, he conferred the Sacrament of Orders on certain candidates in the church of St Augustine.* The following day found him once more at Annecy.

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* C. A. de S., l. v, p. 360.

The next duty to which the Bishop had to devote his attention was the holding of the diocesan synod. Already, on August 11, he had sent out an edict, convoking all the abbots, priors, deans, and parish priests of the diocese to an assembly on October 2. Francis had particularly chosen this day, the feast of the Guardian Angels, in order to place the synod in a special manner under the protection of the Angel of the diocese, for whom, as we have seen, he cultivated an intense devotion. In the edict of convocation the Bishop commanded all whom it concerned to prepare an exact account of the condition and needs of their churches, to be presented to officials appointed by him: he also enjoined on them to make some sort of arrangement, by which during their absence their parishes should be served by their curates or by other priests who were not bound to attendance on the synod.

On October 1 there took place at the Bishop's house a preliminary session, attended by the Canons of the town, the archpriests, and more prominent members of the clergy, at which the details of the ceremonial were discussed and the various officers of the synod appointed. The next day the synod was opened by the celebration of solemn pontifical Mass, the music of which was sung by the united choirs of the churches of Annecy. This was followed by a procession of the clergy and the Bishop through the town. When all were assembled once more in the cathedral, one of the Canons gave the clergy an eloquent discourse in Latin on the dignity of the priesthood and of the sacerdotal life, to which the Bishop, seated on a faldstool in front of the altar, added a few words full of devotion and power. In the afternoon session, after notice had been taken of the names of those who were absent, the assembly attacked the business part of the synod. Ten examiners were appointed whose duty it was to hold the public *concursus*, or competitions, in which the merits of the various candidates for a vacant benefice were inspected and judged.

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* *Ibid.*, p. 363.

Then came the nomination of deputies for the clergy, twelve priests who were commissioned thenceforth to represent their brethren officially, and to sustain their rights in certain assemblies. Besides these officials there were also appointed twenty clerical inspectors, corresponding to twenty districts into which the diocese had been divided by Francis de Sales. "These inspectors," says Pérennès, "known later on by the name of archpriests, were of the greatest assistance to the Bishop, who was unable to see everything for himself in so wide a diocese, and whose eye and arm they, so to speak, became, each one in his own district rendering an account to the Ordinary every six months of all that was taking place within his jurisdiction."*

When these appointments had been made, the Bishop published his synodal decrees. These touched upon the subjects usual in such documents. There were regulations concerning the dress of the clergy, the obligation of residence, and the qualifications necessary in a priest's servant or housekeeper as regards age and respectability. Rules were given for the settlement of disputes between parish priests about certain stole fees, and also for the care and keep of the Blessed Sacrament and the holy Oils. The decrees of the Council of Trent were to be rigidly observed as regards the recitation of the divine Office and the celebration of Holy Mass. Ecclesiastics were forbidden to enter inns and taverns in their own district, and even elsewhere, except out of sheer necessity; they were not to attend fairs and markets except in the few cases where it might be necessary; they were forbidden to play games "in the public squares, cross-roads, streets, ways, and other public places"; there was also prohibited for the clergy all hunting carried on with the coursing of dogs, and with the arquebus, the bearing of which was forbidden to clerics at all times. One or two of the regulations give a little insight into the curious abuses that had become customary in some places. Thus, parish priests were forbidden to give out at sermon time any notice or advertisement of profane or secular business. Another rule runs as follows: "Parish priests henceforward will not allow ladies and other women to place their benches in the choirs of the churches, and will see to it that those, which by an abuse have been already placed therein, shall be removed." Again: "No one shall exercise the office of exorcist without special and recent approval; and all exorcists are generally forbidden to command that the Evil One reveal the name of wizards and witches, or any other sort of sin. . . . It is also forbidden to use unknown words and superstitious characters and signs in the prayers and adjurations which are made against storms." Last of all, it was commanded that "all rectors and curates possess a copy of the decrees, and hang them up in the sacristies or in some place in the churches, where they may be often seen and considered."*

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* Pérennès, vol. ii, chap. xiv, p. 132.

When the publication of these decrees was ended, the Bishop passed on to another matter. This was to institute a devotion in honour of the Blessed Sacrament, such as would offer up some reparation at least for the acts of disrespect which had been committed against the holy Eucharist by Protestants in the immediate past and which were still only too frequent throughout the country. He told his priests that inasmuch as "the heretics had pushed their ingratitude and perfidy so far as to ridicule the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, it was especially fitting in the diocese of Geneva that constant homage should be paid to this great mystery of love with all the devotion possible." By virtue of a brief which he had obtained from the Holy See, he decreed that on those Thursdays which were not occupied by a feast of semi-double or double rank the office of the Blessed Sacrament should be recited, except during Lent and Advent and on vigils of feasts. His last words to the assembly were an earnest exhortation that all the priests of the diocese should devote themselves generously to the work of the catechisms, such as he had just founded in Annecy itself.

Struck by the great benefits which accrued from this first synod, the Bishop decided to make it an annual institution, fixed as its regular date the Wednesday of the second week after Easter, and decreed a fine of ten pounds against all those who should be absent without lawful reason. The attendance at these synods, however, cannot be said to have been good. Possibly the difficulty of travelling in those days through a wild and mountainous country had something to do with this fact: at any rate, only about one-seventh of the parish priests attended each year. During the last six years of the Saint's episcopate no synod was convoked. These assemblies, nevertheless, did a vast amount of good to those who took advantage of them. Apart from meeting his clergy thus in public, the Saint devoted all the spare time during the synodal period to interviews with those of the priests who wished to see him. From these and from his archpriests he gained an exhaustive knowledge of his diocese, and it became a tradition amongst his clergy that there was no way of escaping his watchfulness. Yet he never resorted to severity except in the most extreme and unrepentant cases of offence, and his clergy came away from his presence, whether that of public meeting or private interview, strengthened and consoled by his charity, wisdom, and power of encouragement.

With regard to the Saint's training of his clergy, we will give M. Hamon's account almost word for word. "It had never been in the Bishop's power to have a seminary, properly so called, where, in conformity with the decree of the Council of Trent, those who aspired to the priesthood might study their vocation and prepare themselves in silence and retreat for their sublime ministry. He possessed neither the revenues nor the staff necessary for the formation of such an establishment. In vain did he solicit the Holy See to authorize him for this purpose to impose a tax on all benefices, in order to enable him to meet this expense: such authorization never came. In vain also did he urge Cardinal de Bérulle to found a congregation, devoted to the education of the clergy, in which he might find directors, such as he desired for these ecclesiastical schools: later on he saw the birth of that invaluable congregation, though he never obtained from it any subjects for his purpose. Nevertheless, in his distress, he, at any rate, accomplished all that was possible to supply so urgent a need.

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* *Vide* Opuscules from Blaise's *Œuvres Complètes*, p. 261.

"Whenever any young men presented themselves for holy Orders, he studied their conduct, their character, their talents, and their virtue. In order to make sure that they possessed the necessary knowledge, he would make them undergo a serious examination, interrogating them himself or having them questioned by others in his presence. Those in whom he did not find the requisite conditions, or whom he perceived to be urged towards the priesthood against their own inclination for motives of personal or family interest, he would dismiss relentlessly, in spite of the most importunate appeals on the part of parents or patrons. Those, on the other hand, whom he recognized as being truly called to the sacred vocation, he instructed himself in their ecclesiastical duties, encouraged them by his exhortations to a life of piety and study, and often, in spite of his overwhelming occupations, devoted himself to the hearing of their confessions. His friends, alarmed at the heavy additional work given to him by this ministry, strove to make him relinquish it. 'I do not invite them to come to me,' he answered, 'they ask me themselves: and God allows it, in order that the shepherd may know his sheep and may be known in turn to them.'

"After he had thus prepared these young clerics, he conferred Orders upon them during the Ember weeks; and, esteeming that thereby he became the father of a new priestly race, whose perseverance was confided to his care, he contracted a special alliance with the angel guardians of these priests, in order that by the union of watchfulness and prayer he might himself the better fulfil his mission as visible guardian angel of his clergy. From the day of their ordination he treated these new ministers with a deep respect, anxious to imitate the angels, whom his faith showed to him as venerating in the priest the sublimity of the sacerdotal character. With regard to this matter he loved to relate an incident, of which he himself was witness on an Ember Saturday of 1603. When a young priest who had just been ordained by Francis was leaving the church, he was seen to stop several moments at the door of the sacred edifice, and to go through all the movements of one who was inviting someone more honourable than himself to pass in front of him. The Bishop, who was walking a few steps behind the priest and was astonished at this proceeding, took him on one side, when they had left the church, and asked him the meaning of his conduct. The young priest answered: 'God has given me this grace, that I always see my guardian Angel. Before I was a priest, this holy Angel always walked in front of me. But to-day he stopped at the door, and in honour of my priestly character insisted on my going out first, telling me that he is my servant and the servant of all priests.'*

"The next thing Francis de Sales did was to assign some position to his newly-ordained priests. He never, however, gave them any benefice except by means of the competitive *concursus*. This was his invariable rule, and in its constant observance he found three great advantages: firstly, that of creating in his diocese an educated clergy, by thus exciting the desire of study among his priests, who were aware that knowledge was the means necessary for eventually obtaining a parish; secondly, that of making intrigues and favouritism impossible, by tying his own hands; thirdly, that of satisfying his conscience by placing the responsibility for appointments upon a council, composed of the most learned and virtuous ecclesiastics in his diocese. The *concursus* itself was conducted with such rigid impartiality that, whenever any of his own people, either friends or connections, were to compete, he would abstain from assisting on that occasion, for fear of influencing by his presence the judgement of the examiners: his place would then be taken by his Vicar-General.

"After having found places for his priests in accordance with such strict rules of justice, he would on every occasion impress upon them the principles of the ecclesiastical life; he would develop in them the excellence of the priesthood, the purity of heart, and the exemplariness of life demanded by the daily offering of the holy Sacrifice; he would cheer them up in their discouragements and would invite them to come and consult him in their difficulties. 'Take courage,' he would say to them; 'if you come to see me, I will willingly teach you what you ought to do. For that I give you my word. When I have not the time, I shall beg you to excuse me, and when I do not know the answer to the thing you may ask me, I will devote time to studying the matter.' If he employed so much zeal in educating the spiritual chiefs of his parishes, it was, as he said himself, 'because good parish priests are no less necessary than good bishops. Vainly will the bishops work for the salvation of the souls confided to their guidance, if they are not seconded by devout, exemplary, and learned priests: for it is not the bishops who are the actual shepherds, walking in front of the flocks, to show them the way to heaven. Experience demonstrates that whatever the parish priest is, that also is the parish: when the people are directed by a learned and edifying priest, they tend easily towards virtue, but the contrary will always happen if the priest, faithless to his duty, fails to give them instruction and good example.'* Consequently he never ceased exhorting his priests to study. 'Those amongst you,' he would say, 'who make occupations for yourselves such as hinder you from studying are like those who refuse their stomachs wholesome food, in order to give them nothing but tasty viands incapable of affording strength. I tell you, in truth, ignorance is more to be feared in priests than sin, because by ignorance one not only ruins one's own soul, but dishonours and degrades the priesthood. I beg you, therefore, my very dear brethren, to devote yourselves seriously to study. Knowledge in a priest is the eighth sacrament of the ecclesiastical hierarchy; and the Church's greatest evils have come from the fact that the ark of knowledge was found in other hands than those of the Levites. If Geneva has worked such terrible ravage amongst us, it is because we were idle, confining ourselves to saying our breviary, without thinking of making ourselves more learned: and it took advantage of our negligence to make people believe that up to then no one had understood the meaning of Holy Scripture. Thus, whilst we were asleep, the enemy set our house on fire, and we should all of us have been lost, if the divine Goodness had not raised up the Fathers of the Society of Jesus, those powerful minds, those great men, possessed of such untiring courage, such intrepid zeal, such profound learning; who not only lead a saintly and exemplary life, but who devour books in their continual studies; who, in spite of calumny, insult, and outrage, have re-established the true faith, and who still at this very day by their great labours are filling the world with learned men and destroying heresy in every direction. My dear brethren, since divine Providence, disregarding my unworthiness, has made me your Bishop, I beg of you to study with all your might, in order that, being learned and of good life, you may be altogether irreproachable and ready to answer all those who question you on the things of faith.'

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* C. A. de S., l. v, p. 345.

"As to the method of their studies, the holy bishop made two recommendations to his priests: the first, to devote themselves to the true principles of sound theology, especially that of St Thomas and St Bonaventure, and not to linger over certain scholastic subtleties about which men dispute for ages without becoming any the wiser, and always to propose to themselves in their studies a supernatural end. On this point he loved to quote the words of St Bernard; 'Some there are who want to know, merely in order to know, and that is foolish curiosity; who want to know, that they themselves may be known, and that is vanity; or who want to know, in order to sell knowledge, and that is sordid money-making; but some there are who want to know, that they may edify, and that is charity, or that they themselves may be edified, and that is wisdom.'

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* Dep. of Michel Favre.

"In order to aid his priests in the accomplishment of their duties and to direct them in the administration of the Sacrament of Penance, on which so greatly depends the salvation of all the souls in a diocese, he addressed to his clergy at the beginning of the second year of his episcopate (January 9, 1604) a circular full of that gentleness and wisdom which were particularly characteristic of his spirit. In this work he begins by recommending his priests to bring to the sacred tribunal great purity of conscience and an ardent desire for the salvation of souls. 'Remember,' he then says to them, 'that the poor penitents call you their father, and that you must have for them a father's heart, must receive them with gentleness, must bear patiently their boorishness, their ignorance, and all their defects, like the father of the prodigal son, who did not allow himself to be repelled by the disgusting state of nudity and dirt in which he saw his son, but embraced him affectionately and kissed him tenderly, because he was a father and because the heart of every father is tender towards his children.'

"Consistently with this principle, he insists that the confessor should lift up the courage of those whose sins make them ashamed or timid, by telling them that he knows enough of human weakness not to be harsh with those who have sinned; that a man by penance and confession of his faults more than repairs the dishonour which he brought on himself by those faults, and that repentance is a second innocence. If, on the other hand, the penitents seem callous and without fear, the writer desires that the confessor should remind them that they are kneeling before God as their judge, not before a man; and at that moment they are dealing with the awful business of a happy or unhappy eternity; and that a badly made confession would be for them but another crime. As to those who are wanting in confidence, he recommends the confessor to point out that the mercy of God is greater than our misery; that the goodness of Jesus Christ is without limit, who, by praying for his executioners, gives us to understand that, even had we crucified him with our own hands, he would still pardon us, if he saw that we were repentant; that the least repentance, provided it be sincere and be accompanied by the grace of the sacrament, has, before God, the virtue of wiping out all sin; that those who are eternally lost, and even the demons themselves, would be justified if they could receive the sacrament with a sentiment of repentance; that the greatest saints have often been the greatest sinners, like David, St Peter, St Matthew, St Mary Magdalen, St Augustine; that the worst insult one can inflict upon the goodness of

God and upon the passion and death of Jesus Christ is not to have confidence in seeking the pardon of our sins; and that finally the forgiveness of sins is an article of faith."

M. Hamon then gives a short résumé of the methods recommended by the Saint for aiding penitents in their confessions, of the questions it may be necessary to ask, and of the nature of the penances imposed.

"Finally," says the biographer, "he urges confessors to recommend their penitents to go to confession and communion frequently, to assist at sermons and instructions, to read good spiritual books such as the works of Granada, to avoid evil conversations and to frequent good companions, to pray often, to make an examination of conscience every evening, to meditate upon the four last things, to have a crucifix and holy pictures, and to kiss these often."

"Such are the rules which the holy prelate drew up for his priests; but as people very often have illusions, and as confessors are likely to mistake in their penitents as inspirations of the Holy Ghost what are only the inspirations of self-love, or the wanderings of a fevered imagination, or the suggestions of the spirit of darkness, he thought fit to add to his circular a number of rules for the discernment of spirits. According to this skilful master, the marks of the Spirit of God are: (i) humility, which teaches man to appreciate his weakness, to tremble at the contemplation of himself, but to feel hope in the thought of God; (ii) gentleness and mercy for the faults of others; (iii) patience and love of suffering; and (iv) obedience, which likes to be led. On the contrary, the marks of the spirit of error are self-esteem, which reckons upon its own virtue, values its own judgement and opinions, seeks parade and publicity, is touchy and easy to offend; a harsh zeal, without compassion for the faults of others; impatience, which grumbles at suffering and becomes discouraged in the midst of difficulties; and, finally, pride and obstinacy, which are incapable of submission.

"All these wise counsels were accompanied by a letter not less remarkable: 'My very dear brothers,' he writes to his priests, 'the office which you exercise is of the greatest excellence, since you are established on behalf of God to judge souls with so much authority that the just sentences, which you pronounce upon the earth, are ratified in heaven. Your mouths are the channels by which peace flows from heaven to earth upon men of good will. Your voices are the trumpets of the great Jesus, destroying the walls of iniquity, that mystical Jericho. It is the highest honour for men to be raised to this dignity, to which the angels themselves have not been called: for to which of the angels has God said—*Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven?* Being, then, employed in this admirable office, you ought night and day to apply thereto your care, and I a great part of my attention. For this reason I address to you this little work, thinking that you will find it very useful.'

"This pamphlet did an immense amount of good, not only in Savoy, but in France and in Italy. It was translated into several languages, and received everywhere with the same welcome. Critics might possibly wish that it had been composed with more attention as to style, and, indeed, the author's continued occupations did not permit of his giving to it a final polish: but it would be impossible to desire more wisdom in its counsels or more of the spirit of God in the expounding of its rules."*

The last means which the holy Bishop used for the reformation of his clergy was the exercise of a wise firmness with regard to intractable or guilty priests. "There is no doubt," says Dom Mackey, "that he leaned entirely to the side of mercy and forgiveness, but it is equally certain that he did not fall into a weak tolerance. It is only necessary to look deeply enough into the facts. The necessity of correction was with him a fixed principle. M. Jean François de Blonay states that the Saint was accustomed to say: 'It is a mistake to think of tolerating evil amongst the clergy for fear of offending them and of driving them away. It is certain that the only means of having a good and numerous clergy is to keep good discipline, to pray God to bless them, because on them depends the salvation of souls, and not to tolerate those who are given to vice.' He was inexorable against those who stained the priestly character by immoral conduct. On another occasion a person of influence wished to intercede for a curé who, in a fit of anger, had struck his father in public. In reply to the request the indignant prelate exclaimed: 'It is useless to ask me: he shall suffer the full penalty of his crime.' Disrespect in the service of God and violation of synodal constitutions were invariably noted by him and severely punished. He admitted that everyone desired to be tried by him, because he preferred the mildest course possible; but, he added, 'we have appointed an official—a judicial assessor or deputy—in order that strict justice may be done.' "†

The results accruing from the Bishop's care for his clergy were soon evident, and several of his contemporaries gave evidence of the excellent state of his diocese. St Jane Frances de Chantal testified: "I think there are few, or no, dioceses, in which ecclesiastics, religious, and laity live in more exemplary or devout manner than in that of Geneva, and especially in this town of Annecy: an extraordinary devotion is found therein, both as regards the frequent reception of the sacraments and the attendance at church and as regards the goodness of the people, who live strong in the fear of God, enduring their afflictions in patience: and all this through the good example and holy instructions of their saintly bishop." "I do not think," said Mgr. Camus to St Francis himself, "that there is in the whole of France a diocese better administrated or more exemplary than yours, nor better provided with good pastors and wise and virtuous ecclesiastics."*

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* Hamon, l. iv, chap. ii, p. 496 *et seq.*

† Article on "St Francis of Sales and the Formation of the Clergy" in the *American Ecclesiastical Review*, November, 1898.

About the time of the holding of the Synod there was spread through the country a rumour that the King of France was intending to give back to Savoy the country of Gex. On October 25 the Duke wrote from Turin to the Bishop, and, on account of certain evil reports which had been made to the Holy See, requested Francis to send to the Holy Father a full description of all that had been done for the cause of religion during the last four years within the realm of Savoy. It is possible that need was caused for this proposed letter by some sort of secret negotiation about the country of Gex, and that Charles Emmanuel wished to gain over to his side the powerful aid of the Holy See. At any rate, Francis obeyed the Duke's request and wrote a magnificent letter to the Holy Father, giving a short history of what had happened during the religious troubles, and then setting forth in full the very prominent part which Charles Emmanuel had taken in the missionary enterprise of Chablais. In accordance with a request made in the Duke's letter, Francis not only signed this letter himself and put his episcopal seal thereto, but he also had the truth of its narrative guaranteed by the signatures of several of the Canons and distinguished ecclesiastics, who had themselves been eyewitnesses of the events related in the letter.†

In the sequel the Bishop's hopes that Gex would be surrendered to Savoy, and that consequently he would have a free hand for the restoration of religion in that country, were not fulfilled. The support he obtained from the French government was very meagre. In spite of Henry IV's edict, which granted full liberty of conscience to the province of Gex, he was able to establish therein a very small number of parishes. The French government was afraid of rousing the strong Protestant interests by granting any very great concessions to the Catholics. Many of them strove without success to obtain authorization for the reopening of their churches: and even those who obtained this favour found themselves greatly hindered in their after-work. This was due partly to the King's prohibition that the people should be made to contribute to the restoration of the churches or to any other religious purpose, and partly to the very natural tenacity with which the ministers hung on to the ecclesiastical revenues. Although judgement had been given that certain of these had to be surrendered, yet, as the Bishop wrote to M. Deshayes in Paris, the ministers were just as obstinate in refusing to give back these incomes as they were in support of any of the articles of their faith.*

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* *Esprit*, Partie II, chap. iv

† Consult Tom. XII, E.N., Appendix, p. 459. Also Lettre CCIV, p. 228.

In another direction Seyssel was threatened with a resurrection of the Protestant religion, and the Bishop was unable, without the consent of France, to appoint a rural dean for the people recently taken away from Savoy, who were earnestly asking for some ecclesiastic to represent the Ordinary.† He was somewhat consoled by the arrival of Baron de Lux, who, accompanied by several councillors of the Burgundian Parliament, had come by the King's command to superintend the granting of religious liberty to the Catholics, and to settle the difficulties created by the opposition of the Calvinists. The envoys succeeded in placing the Catholics in possession of the Church of St Peter in Gex, as well as of the presbytery buildings and other property belonging to that parish. Several other districts, emboldened by this event, came to the Baron to demand on their own behalf the exercise of the Catholic religion, the re-establishment of which had hitherto been prevented by the fear of the Protestant party.

* PS. to Lettre CCX, p. 254, Tom. XII, E.N.

† Lettre CCXIII, p. 257

CHAPTER XVIII*

(1603–1604)

Reasons for the Saint's going to Dijon—Letter to the Pope—Retreat at Sales—Francis receives a vision as to the founding of an Order—He goes to Dijon—Effect of his preaching and conduct—He saves an impostor from the crowd—His description of the people of Dijon—Early history of Jane Frances de Chantal—She meets the Bishop at Dijon—Miraculous incident at the Bishop's communion on Holy Thursday—Baroness de Chantal seeks the guidance of Francis—Francis is challenged by Cassegrain—Gratitude of the people of Dijon—Francis leaves the city

FOR some time now the Bishop of Geneva had been preparing for a visit to the city of Dijon. The mayor and aldermen of that city, having heard of his renown as a preacher, had invited him to visit them for the purpose of preaching a course of sermons. It would seem as if the invitation had been originally for the Advent of 1603, but it was eventually accepted for the Lent of the following year. There were, as we shall see, several matters that called the Saint to Dijon. One of these concerned the benefices of his country of Gex. Henry IV, in a moment of forgetfulness, had granted to André Frémiot those very revenues which he had already ceded to Francis for the re-establishment of the Catholic parishes in that country. This André Frémiot was a councillor of the parliament of Dijon, who, although not yet ordained to the priesthood, had been nominated Archbishop of Bourges. The Archbishop-elect was by no means willing to surrender these benefices, and there had already been legal proceedings at Dijon. Francis, on the other hand, had engaged M. Deshayes in Paris to support the claims of the diocese of Geneva, which certainly seems to have had a prior right to the funds in question, and was in far greater need of their assistance. The Saint, however, realized that lawsuits "between bishops cannot but be the cause of scandal": he was, therefore, anxious to have a personal interview with the Archbishop, and to obtain a friendly settlement of the matter.

Consequently he wrote to the Duke for leave to go to Dijon, for he could not, without the Prince's permission, quit his country of Savoy for so long a time. Charles Emmanuel, who disliked this idea of a journey into France, probably out of political jealousy, at first refused his consent. On receiving a special request from the aldermen of Dijon, however, the Duke changed his attitude, and gave Francis leave to go whither he was so pressingly invited.

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* Hamon, l. iv, chap. iii.

The Bishop's next letter was to Pope Clement VIII, asking permission to leave his diocese for the space of two months. In giving the reasons for this departure, he was careful not to make any complaint against the Archbishop-elect of Bourges, but mentioned simply that he had a lawsuit against a councillor of the Burgundian parliament at Dijon. The letter explains so ably the difficulties of the Bishop of Geneva's position that we give it practically in full.

"Amongst the numerous difficulties of this diocese, one there is which arises from the fact that it is submitted to two different temporal jurisdictions. Although the greater part of it is ruled by the Duke of Savoy, a very considerable portion is under the crown of France. From this diversity of sovereigns arises the necessity that I should treat and maintain good relations with both, as also with their lieutenants and parliaments or senates: and this causes me no little difficulty, especially with regard to France, where it is known that I am a Savoyard and a vassal of Savoy. Now, because the parliament of Dijon holds sway over that part of the diocese which is in France, I find myself obliged to deal with it in regard to five difficulties that have arisen.

"The first relates to the bailiwick of Gex, for the ecclesiastical property of which (a very small amount, indeed, since the Catholic religion has only been re-established in three places) I have to plead against a councillor of the said parliament. The second concerns the manner of visiting that part of the diocese, for it is forbidden to exact any money from the people, either for the fabric of the churches or for any other purpose. The third, that the populations recently detached from Savoy are demanding a vicar-forane. The fourth is that, although, through the diligent offices of the apostolic Nuncio in France, there is no longer any question of establishing the heretical worship at Seyssel, yet, unless I give particular information of the circumstances which should prevent such an establishment, the project will be not so much abandoned as merely deferred. The fifth is that many Catholics of Gex might by the so-called edict of liberty obtain the exercise of the Catholic religion in their parishes, but that they have no one to present their request nor to solicit its ratification.

"Wherefore, Holy Father, after obtaining permission from His Highness of Savoy, I find myself forced to go to Dijon, situated outside my diocese, but being the government-seat of that part of my diocese which belongs to France. There I propose to labour, with whatever means God shall grant me, for the settling of the matters mentioned above, and I will give an account of everything to Your Holiness's two Nuncios in France and Savoy. I could never imagine that Your

Holiness would disapprove of this short absence which I am forced to arrange for the needs of my diocese. I leave it well provided with spiritual facilities, and I hope to see it once more at the end of two months. A special reason for my going is that the chief men of that city, knowing that I was under some necessity to visit their parts, have asked me to preach the Lenten course of sermons there. Thinking that this apostolate would help me in bringing my business with them to a more prompt and successful issue, I willingly accepted the invitation. Nevertheless, I was anxious to inform Your Holiness of my determination, as I would like to do with regard to all my actions, which should be guided in all things and everywhere by your apostolic pleasure."*

Before setting out on his journey to Dijon Francis decided to make a few days' spiritual retreat. The house he chose for this purpose was the château of Sales. Few places, indeed, were better suited for a retreat. He himself was the spiritual director of every one of the numerous household, and he had so trained them in the excellence of the Christian life that the château might have been better described as a monastery than as the home of a great and noble family. It must not, however, be imagined that it was an abode from which the ordinary joys of domestic life were rigidly banished. It was a Christian house in which all lived together in peace, concord, and happiness. The Bishop shows his intimate knowledge of human life when, in a letter written at a later date to St Jane Frances de Chantal, he comments on the wonderful unity that existed at Sales, where in patriarchal fashion a number of families were living in the same house. "I am at present full of a deep and incomparable consolation," he wrote, "in the company of my mother. Truly you would be delighted to see such perfect agreement amongst things which are ordinarily discordant—mother-in-law, daughter-in-law, sister-in-law, brothers, and brothers-in-law. Amongst all these, my daughter, I can for the glory of God assure you that there is but one heart and one soul in the unity of a very holy love."† Mme. de Boisy was the actual guiding power of the household. "This excellent mother," says M. Hamon, "neglected nothing in order to encourage the growth of every virtue in her house: and in order to succeed the better in this purpose, she loved to consult her saintly son whenever opportunity allowed it. From the moment that he became a priest she had taken him for her confessor and guide; and when she saw him honoured with the episcopate, her confidence in his wisdom was redoubled, and she only looked upon him henceforward as her father and visible guardian angel. She religiously followed all his advice, and wrote to him in order to obtain it: the excellent instructions which he gave her formed, later on, a part of that incomparable book—*The Introduction to the Devout Life*."*

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* E.N., Tom. XII, Lettre CCXIII, p. 257.

† E.N., Tom. XIII, Lettre CCXXV, p. 347.

It was at the château of Sales, then, that Francis prepared himself for his work at Dijon. This he did partly by study and reflection. The greatest proportion of his time, however, was devoted to prayer, for he relied rather upon that illumination which comes from God in times of spiritual meditation than upon the knowledge and ideas gained from books by human endeavour. And God blessed his choice in a remarkable manner. One day, when he was alone in the chapel of St Sebastian, occupied in mental prayer, he was suddenly invaded by a state of ecstasy. During the course of this supernatural operation two wonderful things happened to him. The first was a sudden illumination, which shed upon his mind a flood of light concerning the mysteries of the faith and the dispensation of graces. The second was an explicit revelation that he was one day to become the founder of an Order of nuns. He was even given a vision of those religious who were to form the nucleus of his congregation. He saw a lady whose face was remarkable for its dignity and modesty, whose figure was tall and commanding, and who was clothed in the black dress of a widow: with her were two religious dressed in a similar fashion. An inner voice told him that these were to be the first sisters of the new foundation. The manner in which this Order was to increase and multiply was shown to him by two symbols; the one was a tree, planted in a valley, from the depths of which it grew in size and luxuriance, until it overtopped the surrounding mountains; the other was a fountain of sweet water, tiny enough at its source, but ever flowing on in a widening course, until it divided and spread over the land in several fair streams and noble rivers.† The vision lasted but half an hour: yet the impression of the divine grace communicated to him remained for a long time upon him, and left its mark upon his physical appearance. "I was present," testified François Favre, "together with Georges Rolland, when the Saint came back from his ecstasy, and I was a witness of the fact that his face seemed to shine like that of a man carried up to God: all the other members of his family saw it just as we did."

Francis set out for Dijon towards the end of the month of February, 1604, with a feeling of regret at the thought of leaving his diocese, even for a short time. "I never quit my fold," he used to say, "without anxiety. I fear lest my sheep should suffer hunger whilst I am feeding those of other people, or that the wolf, taking advantage of my absence, should carry off some of my flock."

The aldermen of the city of Dijon, on hearing that the Bishop of Geneva was drawing near, went out to meet him, accompanied by a number of ecclesiastics and several of the leading citizens. They received him with every mark of honour, and then conducted him to the apartments which had been prepared for his reception. These lay in the rue Vannerie, in the house of M. Philip de Villers, a barrister and king's counsel.*

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* Hamon, vol. i, p. 514.

† C. A. de S., l. vi, p. 377. Dep. of Père de Coex (Pérennès, l. vi, chap. i).

As soon as Francis began his course of sermons in the church of the Holy Chapel, he found himself surrounded by a closely thronged audience. His eloquence, his clearness of exposition, his power of reason, and, above all, his saintly zeal had just the same results here as they had had in Paris. So struck by his sermons were a number of the ecclesiastics and laity, that they strove to take his words down on paper during the time of his preaching, an attempt which was made more possible by the measured slowness of his delivery. Not only Catholics, but Calvinists, came to listen to the words of the Bishop of Geneva, and they were profoundly impressed by what they heard and saw. For they found a man who preached, not so much with an assumption of command, as with an irresistible appeal of persuasion; who, even when he treated matters of controversy, spoke not as a logician jealous of his reputation and anxious for victory, but as a father, who, convinced that those he controverted were in error, strove, with love and a generous desire for their own welfare, to bring them to the glorious light of truth. But, above all, it was during Holy Week that he rose to the summit of his power, when he spoke of the Passion of the Son of God. His own intense love of Jesus Christ, his keen imagination of the terrible sufferings endured by our Lord, his horror of sin which caused them, his realization of the need of sinners to understand and feel the Passion—all these filled his heart and mind with such an intensity of charity and sacred grief that he brought numbers of his audience to tears and moved even those who were seldom given to emotion. The work that he did in the pulpit he continued in the course of private conversation, sometimes with a saintly disregard of persons that proved the purity of his motives. On the day after he had preached his wonderful Good Friday sermon, a president of the parliament came to him, and, during the course of compliments, remarked that he had never wept so much in his life. Francis, who happened to know that in one respect this man was leading a bad life, took him up at once. "Ah, sir," said the Bishop, "the daughters of Jerusalem wept in the same way, when they saw the sufferings of the God-man: and our Saviour told them to weep over themselves. The children of the Church are not satisfied merely with this dew of tears, but they tear up from the ground the thorns that hinder the seed from giving forth fruit a hundredfold." The president understood the allusion, and promised that thenceforward he would abandon the sinful state in which he had been living.*

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* C. A. de S., l. vi, p. 378.

The life which the Saint led at Dijon was a powerful auxiliary to the work of his sermons. He lived not for himself but for others, always ready to receive those who came to see him, visiting the poor in their homes and the sick in the public hospitals. It was at these same hospitals that he liked to say his Mass for the sake of those who were suffering there, and needed so urgently this best of all spiritual consolations. He also spent considerable time in talking with them, in giving them instructions, and in preparing them for holy confession and the reception of the Blessed Sacrament.†

One of his favourite occupations was the making of pilgrimages to the room in which St Bernard had been born, and which had been converted into a chapel. This was the chapel of St Bernard de Fontaines. Thither he would also go from time to time to say Mass. It was when returning from one of these occasions that he was able to rescue a miserable wretch from ill-treatment—an ill-treatment which was not altogether undeserved. This man, by way of earning a living, had passed himself off as a priest, and had gone so far as to pretend to offer up Mass. His imposture had been detected and a crowd of indignant people had gathered round him with the intention of taking the administration of justice into their own hands. The man had already suffered a certain amount of castigation, when the Saint appeared, and succeeded in snatching him away from the attacks of the angry populace. Francis told them that even in the case of an impostor, passing himself off as a priest, they must exercise mercy: that the man's utter need might be used as an excuse. For himself, if he had been the first to discover the imposture, he would have taken the man to his room, would have given him some of the food which was so liberally supplied by the people of Dijon to their guest, and would then have corrected his fault by admonishing him in all charity. "Perhaps," added the Saint, "out of a pretended priest I might, by the grace of God, have made of him a veritable Aaron. Not that I am cleverer than others; but I would have placed my hope in God, and he would have bestowed his blessing upon the rightness of my intention."‡

As Easter drew near, there was added to his labours an almost continual attendance in the confessional. People came to him in crowds, and during Holy Week and Easter week he was kept occupied so continually by this duty that he seemed only to interrupt it for the purpose of going up into the pulpit. It was almost a miracle that his strength could endure the strain. For himself, far from complaining of weariness, he experienced a great happiness in his work, and continually found cause to bless God for the wonderful results which attended his mission. We find a short and humble description of his success in a letter, written some months later to Mgr. de Revol, the Bishop of Dol. "This last Lent I preached at Dijon, where I had good and important business to transact on behalf of my diocese, which business I was enabled, by this means, to finish with all the success that I could desire. I have never met a people so good and so gracious, nor so amenable to the reception of sacred impressions. A certain amount of fruit was obtained, in spite of my unworthiness, not only by those who listened to me so attentively, but also by myself, who have seen so much true piety in several people that I have been very much moved thereby. Some Huguenots were converted; some other folk, who were doubtful and hesitating, were strengthened in their faith; a number of people made general confessions, even to me, so much confidence had they in my affection; and several entered upon a new way of life. Such is the goodness of these people. Moreover, I will tell you this: I have noticed several hundreds of lay people, living in the world, who are leading a very perfect existence, and who, in the midst of the turmoil of the world's affairs, are daily making their meditation and holy exercise of mental prayer."*

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* *Année*, April 16. Hamon quotes De Cambis, Tom. I, p. 511.

† C. A. de S., l. vi, p. 379.

‡ Some of the words ascribed by Charles Auguste de Sales to the Saint on this occasion are very difficult to understand—which probably accounts for the very free rendering given both by Hamon and Pérennès. *Vide* C. A., l. vi, p. 379.

Testimony such as this is surely of value in judging the life of those days. Often enough the story of public history is full of crime and vice, and we are inclined to condemn a whole society by what we know of the notorious few. The history of the days in which St Francis lived is filled with the gloomiest pictures of savagery and license. Yet here we have the most reliable testimony, drawn from the surest of sources, that underneath the visible turmoil there were hundreds of good people, leading "a very perfect existence" in the service of God, and in spite of that same turmoil "daily making their meditation and holy exercise of mental prayer."

But the most important event that happened to Francis during his stay at Dijon was his meeting with Baroness de Chantal, who was to be the foundress of the Order of the Visitation. It is necessary to go back somewhat and give an account of the early years of this most remarkable woman.

Jane Frances Frémiot,† later Baroness de Chantal, was the daughter of Bénigne Frémiot, a judge of the parliament of Burgundy. She was born on January 23, 1572, at Dijon. The judge, himself an earnest and pious Catholic, saw that his children received a deeply religious education, and from the very first, even as a child, Jane Frances Frémiot was distinguished by her ardent love for Jesus Christ and by her intense dislike of anything or anybody connected with the Huguenot religion.

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* E.N., Tom. XII, Lettre CCXXVII, p. 294.

† Fremiot or Fremyot. Charles Auguste uses the former, Hamon both.

When Marguerite Frémiot, the judge's elder daughter, was married to the Seigneur des Francs, who lived in Poitou, she obtained leave from her father to take her younger sister to her new home. It was here that Jane gave evidence to all around her that she was possessed of a high moral standard, a strong will, and a keen intelligence. The atmosphere of some of the companies in which she found herself was not of the best, and she in one instance was obliged to defend her honour courageously and cleverly against the insinuating advances of a man thoroughly versed in the arts of intrigue. She also rejected a brilliant marriage which others were trying to arrange for her, simply because the gentleman concerned was a Huguenot. Eventually her father, unable to endure her absence, recalled her to her home in Dijon.

It was not long, however, before her hand was sought once more in marriage, and she had the good fortune to be united to one who was a gentleman in the best sense of the word, and possessed just those qualities which were calculated to ensure her a happy married life. This was Christophe de Rabutin, Baron de Chantal. "Husband and wife suited each other perfectly," writes M. Hamon. "On the one hand, the Baron, full of the highest courage though he was, and ready to shed the last drop of his blood in the cause of his king, was nevertheless endowed with a graciousness that gave pleasure to all, with a modesty that was the antithesis of any sort of pride, and with a gentleness of disposition that rendered his company delightful: on the other hand, the Baroness joined to a distinguished and dignified bearing a natural gracefulness, without either pretence or exaggeration, a bright and happy humour, a keen and quick intelligence, a sure and reliable judgement—in fine, a collection of qualities which gained for her the name of the perfect gentlewoman."

The Baron bore his young wife away with him to his château of Bourbilly, near Semur, and asked her to take complete charge of the household—a task which was utterly new to her, and all the more difficult in this case because for a long time everything had been left in a state of disorder. The Baroness, however, bravely took up the duties of her position, and devoted herself to three things—the service of God, the good pleasure of her husband, and the management of her household. She soon succeeded in introducing order into the château, settled the wages and tasks of each of the servants in such a way as to satisfy all those who were honest, and insisted that all the business of the house should be managed through her hands, and that she should be acquainted with everything that happened in her little kingdom. Rising early in the morning, she herself made sure that the staff of the house was in full working order by the time that her husband and his guests were about. Every day she heard Mass in the chapel of the château, and arranged that, as far as possible, all the members of her house were also present. On Sundays and feast-days, however, she made a point of going to the parish church, and persuaded her husband to accompany her, for, she would say, " it is the duty of the nobility to give example to the peasants in assisting regularly at the offices which are celebrated in the parish church." It was not long before she had gained the respect and love of her whole household. When her servants committed faults or made stupid mistakes, she was careful to avoid any display of temper, but corrected them calmly and gently. If any of them were found to be afflicted with bad habits, she exercised great patience in trying to cure them, and only dismissed them from her service when they proved obdurate and incorrigible. The only way in which she ever deceived her husband was when, unknown to him, she softened the lot of those of his vassals whom his justice had condemned to the prison of the château for some offence or other, and she always used her powers of persuasion to shorten the term of the delinquent's punishment. Busied as she was with her various tasks, she found little leisure time at her disposal, but what she did manage to find she employed in reading works that dealt either with spirituality or history. She would never tolerate in her house any books that were suspect by reason of their teaching or morality: if she found such, she destroyed them. In the matter of dress she was singularly moderate. On days when her rank and position made a certain amount of display a necessity, she would manage to adapt her wedding-dress to the occasion, or some of the clothes she had worn before her marriage; but on all ordinary occasions she contented herself with the homeliest attire, always neat and clean, but without any sort of richness. Such, however, was her natural good taste and her elegance of carriage that she often appeared to far greater advantage in her simple clothes than did others in the richest and most expensive of costumes.

The order and economy which Mme. de Chantal had introduced into the administration of the estate of Bourbilly were so successful, that in a short time she had liquidated the debts with which the house was burdened when she had come to it; and she took good care thereafter that the expenses were well below the family income. Yet, although she was economical, and, indeed, because she was economical, she gave largely in charity to the poor. Her generosity soon became well known to all the unfortunates, good and bad, of the district, and they would come to the château from a radius of twenty miles. For the most part, however, her charity seems to have been given in that wisest of manners by way of food. She arranged that on certain days the poor people should come into the courtyard by one door, should receive a bowl of soup and a piece of bread from her hands, and should then go out by another door. In a time of famine this distribution of food took place every day. Nor was her kindness scandalized by the little meannesses and frauds of some of the poor, such as so often have a restricting influence on the generosity of kind-hearted people. She was told that some of her clients, after receiving their share of food, and leaving by the door of exit, used to go round the house and come in by the entrance door for a second helping, and even for a third. "My duty," answered Mme. de Chantal, "is to give to these poor people as often as they ask me. Do I not myself act as they do towards my kind Saviour? I have no sooner obtained one grace than I ask him for another. Would I like to be sent away when, for the second and third time, I ask for those graces which are the daily bread of my soul?" In addition to these general distributions she did a certain amount of quiet almsgiving amongst those who were of families too respectable to indulge in begging, but who were often short of food. In connection with Mme. de Chantal's charity, her biographer relates, on the evidence of those who saw it as well as of the Saint herself, a miracle which God was pleased to work as an encouragement to her in her good work. During a period of famine, when she had been giving away food in larger quantities than usual, she went one day to her granary, and found that she had only one barrel of wheaten flour left and very little barley. Nevertheless, she continued her usual distribution, placing her trust in God. For six months her people continued to draw flour from that slender stock without it diminishing, and when the famine came to an end, there was as much left in the barrel as there had been at the time when she had taken stock. The people of the château preserved some of this flour and used to take pride in showing it as a testimony to the saintliness of their beloved lady.

Genuinely religious as she was, the Baroness never turned her piety into one of those luxuries the indulgence of which is a nuisance to everyone else. God she placed first. But Divine Providence had assigned a certain station to her, entailing certain duties on her part, in answer to the just claims which others had upon her love and attention. After her service of God, and, indeed, as a part of it, came her service of her husband. She loved him with a strong, earnest love, always doing her best to please him and to give him every help he needed. Whenever he had guests staying in the house, she fulfilled her duties of hostess to perfection, receiving everybody with the greatest courtesy and charm, looking after their welfare, and taking her full share of entertaining. But whenever M. de Chantal found himself obliged to leave Bourbilly, she changed her whole line of conduct, and devoted herself more fully to her religious exercises. It was then that her dress became more homely than that of many of her retainers. "The eyes that I should please," she would say, "are far from this place at present: I have no reason for dressing myself up." If visitors called, she received them with courtesy, but with a certain reserve, which plainly showed that she was not prepared to entertain during her husband's absence. She was quick to detect anything that might prove an attack upon her honour. A young nobleman, who was greatly attracted by her charm and grace, called at the château during the absence of M. de Chantal, and persisted, in spite of that fact, in being introduced into the house. The Baroness received him with courtesy, conversed with him for a few moments, and then begged him to make himself completely at home and to ask the servants for anything that he needed. As to herself, she was obliged to leave the house for a time. Thereupon she took her leave, and rode away to the home of some friends, until the indiscreet visitor had returned whence he came.

During this happy married life six children were born to the house of Rebutin. Of these two died when quite young, leaving a son and three daughters. At length, about the ninth year of their union, Baron de Chantal fell dangerously ill, and was bound to a bed of sickness for six long months. During all this time his wife attended him with the greatest love and care, doing her best to ease his pain, and comforting him with all the consolation that a really spiritual soul is able to convey to those who suffer. Deeply touched by the religious influence of his wife, the Baron one day proposed to her that they should promise that, when one of them should die, the other should devote what was left of life to the service of God. The idea of being separated from her husband came as a cruel blow to the Baroness, and she refused to entertain the idea: but in a short time a strange warning came to each of them by way of two remarkable and vivid dreams. M. de Chantal dreamt that the clothes which he wore suddenly became reddened as by a tide of blood: his wife at the same time saw herself during sleep dressed in the black crape of a widow's mourning. Not long afterwards M. de Chantal recovered from his sickness and was once more able to take up his usual occupations. It was then that one of his friends, Louis d'Anlezy, Seigneur of Chazelles, proposed to him that it would do him good if they went out shooting in one of the neighbouring woods. De Chantal accepted the proposal with alacrity, and the two of them left the château with their arquebus upon their shoulders. Unfortunately, just as they were making their way through a thicket, something caught the trigger of d'Anlezy's weapon, and the unfortunate Baron received the full charge at short range in his thigh. Feeling a presentiment that he was mortally wounded, M. de Chantal immediately despatched four of his servants to four different parishes, in order to make sure that he would receive the last sacraments. A fifth man was sent off to take the news of the tragedy to Mme. de Chantal. The Baroness herself was at the time ill in bed, but on receiving information of the dreadful accident, she arose and hurried to her husband's side. "Madame," he said to her, "the commands of heaven are just. I must respect them, receive them with love, and prepare for death." The poor Baroness was overwhelmed with grief at the sight of her husband's suffering and at the harrowing thought of being thus cruelly separated from him. She sent for physicians in all haste, and conjured them to make every effort to save so precious a life. In tears and heart-broken misery she besought the help of God. "O Lord, take all that I have," she cried, "but leave me this beloved husband, whom thou didst give to me." The dying man himself, facing death with a noble courage, strove to comfort her with thoughts of resignation to the divine will: but her grief was inconsolable. At last, in spite of all that could be done, the moment of separation came, and the Baron breathed his last in the peace and resignation of a Christian soldier. His death took place in the year 1600.

Deprived thus of all earthly help, Mme. de Chantal found her only consolation in the solemn consecration of her whole being to the service of God. Henceforward, realizing keenly the transitory nature of this life's happiness and the futility of depending upon creatures, she detached herself in spirit from all earthly goods, took a vow of perpetual chastity, and conceived the intensest desire of belonging body and soul to Jesus Christ, in order to live for him alone. Moreover, in her resignation to the will of God she found her consolation. The pain of her loss, the wound to her human love, was still there. But she did not suffer, as do so many, by staring in an uncomprehending fixity at the eternal puzzle of pain. She knew that all things co-operate unto good for them that love God. She knew with the knowledge of faith that it was well with her husband. And the same knowledge told her that God had only afflicted her for her own good and that he acted in all things towards her in the spirit of mercy. Her sorrow, then, and her consolation existed in her soul together, yet it would seem, so to speak, as if in different compartments: so that she could not understand, as she afterwards admitted, how it was possible for her to be so resigned and yet at the same time to experience such utter grief. In this state of mind she desired only one thing, and that was solitude: she found her greatest peace in walking by herself in the seclusion of a small wood, or in the privacy of her room, where she could pass her time in the contemplation of her sorrow and in prayer.

Yet often enough she was refused this fulfilment of her wish to be alone. Kind-hearted persons, either of her family or of the neighbourhood, wishing to give her the help of their sympathy, would call at the château to visit her. While their intentions were excellent, the manner in which they strove to effect their purpose made all their efforts a failure. "Alas!" the Baroness would say to her children, when these visits were ended, "why will they not leave me to weep as I list? They think to bring me comfort, and their consolations are a martyrdom." She would then fall on her knees in her oratory, and would pour forth her sorrow and her prayers in the presence of God. Her children discovered that in this way she was losing her sleep, and in the tenderness of their solicitude they would urge her insistently to take the repose that was necessary for her strength. Externally she would obey. But as soon as she knew that all the people of her household were asleep, she would rise from her bed and spend a part of the night in prayer.

It was not long before another grief was added to her sorrow. She began to suffer from violent and repeated temptations against her faith, which worked against her ardent desire for perfection. On the one hand she experienced the most powerful attraction for the perfect life. "If the tie of my four little children had not held me back," she afterwards said, when speaking of this time, "I would have fled to the Holy Land, and would have hidden myself there, in order to finish my days unknown to the world." On the other hand, the temptations reduced her to a state of desolation, because they seemed to prevent her from loving and serving God as she desired.

In the midst of these troubles she had but one desire in her heart; she earnestly longed for the grace to discern the will of God in her regard and to find an enlightened director who would guide her towards that end. In order to obtain this favour, she gave herself up to a stricter life. She distributed amongst the churches those of her rich dresses the material of which might be used for vestments or for the decoration of altars, and resolved herself to wear only the humblest of stuffs; she gave away amongst the poor whatever clothes, belonging to her husband's wardrobe, would be useful for these unfortunates; she dismissed a number of her servants, after rewarding them generously and finding other places for them; she only kept a household staff just sufficient for the service of her family; and she devoted all her time to the education of her children, to prayer, reading, and the care of the sick and the poor.

All this time she continued to beg of Almighty God that he would show her his will. "I was asking," she wrote later on in life, "for that of which I had no knowledge; for, although I had been brought up by very good people, I had never heard anyone speak of a director, or spiritual master, or of anything similar. But God had planted this desire so deeply in my heart, and the inspiration to ask him for this director was so strong, that I was constantly making this prayer with an unparalleled importunity and force. I spoke to God as if I saw him with my eyes, to such an extent did my faith and desire give me the hope of being answered. I urged before God the inviolability of his word, which promises not to give a stone to him who asks for bread, and to open to those who knock at the door of his mercy. . . . I would go out walking alone, and, as in a transport, I would cry out loud to our Lord: 'My God, I conjure thee, by the truth and fidelity of thy promises, to give me a man who shall guide me spiritually, who shall be genuinely holy and a true servant of thine, who shall teach me thy will and all that thou desirest of me: and I promise, I swear, in thy holy presence, that I will do all that he shall tell me in thy name.' "

In answer to prayers so heartfelt, God at last granted her the consolation of a promise, given by vision. When considering this incident and those that follow, it is well to bear in memory the natural strength and even balance of St Jane Frances's mind, which, to the knowledge of her most intimate friends, was absolutely free from the imaginative tendencies of the ordinary neurotic visionary. On the occasion in question she was taking one of her solitary walks and was engaged, as usual, in praying to God for guidance in her many difficulties, when suddenly before her, at the foot of a hill, she saw an ecclesiastic, dressed in cassock and rochet, with a biretta upon his head, just as she afterwards saw Francis de Sales for the first time in the pulpit at Dijon. As she gazed in amazement, wondering how it was that this priest should be present in such a place, she heard a voice saying to her: "This is the guide, beloved of God and of men, in whose hands you are to place your conscience." And immediately the figure which she had seen disappeared, whilst into her soul there came an indescribable consolation, with the certitude that God had answered her prayer.

On another occasion, whilst she was praying in the chapel of the château, God gave her the vision of an innumerable crowd of maidens and widows, coming towards her, and she heard a voice saying within her heart: "My true servant and you shall have this generation: they shall be to me a chosen flock, but I wish that they be holy." This incident was no less a mystery to her than was a third vision which occurred to her about this time, in the course of which a voice told her that she would only enter upon the peace of the children of God through the gate of St Claud.

About a year after the death of her husband, President Frémiot, her father, called her to Dijon in the hope of distracting her from her grief. It was during her sojourn in this city that, on the urgent recommendation of some friends, she placed herself under the direction of a worthy religious of the neighbourhood, although she saw clearly enough that he was not the priest designated by her vision. For some reason or other—possibly to guard her against the evil of continually changing her confessor, after the fashion of some penitents—this director put her under a promise, or even a vow, not to go for advice to anyone else, and to keep strictly to herself all that he should see fit to tell her. This proceeding was an amazing piece of imprudence and the usurpation of a power which was quite unauthorized. Having thus reduced her to a sort of pious slavery, the good man proceeded to prescribe for her a multiplicity of prayers, meditations, and pious practices, as well as fasting, discipline, and other penances. The obedient penitent faithfully observed all that was commanded of her. But the complicated spiritual system under which she found herself living brought no rest to her soul, and only seemed to increase her anxiety and unhappiness. This unfortunate state of affairs lasted for two years.

In addition to these worries of her soul, another trouble, coming from outside, was placed upon her shoulders. M. de Chantal, her father-in-law, a widower of seventy-five years of age, and a man of severe and disagreeable character, insisted that the Baroness should take up her residence in his house, threatening, in case of refusal, to marry again and to disinherit her children. For the sake of her little ones, therefore, she went to her father-in-law's château at Monthelon, three leagues from Autun. Here she soon found that she would have to endure every kind of oppression from her father-in-law's housekeeper, who even during the lifetime of the old Baron's lady had managed to gain over him a deplorable ascendancy. This unpleasant woman made it her task to render life as disagreeable as possible to the new arrival. Not content with continually reproaching and insulting the young Baroness, she strove to poison the mind of her master against his daughter-in-law. Jane Frances found that she had no part in the management of the house, that she herself was only allowed just what was strictly necessary for the support of life, and that she could not give a cup of water to a stranger without first asking permission. The woman, who had several children, insisted that there should be no difference between them and the children of Mme. de Chantal, that all should eat at the same table, and should be treated as equals. The young widow, not content with enduring everything in silence, set herself to render good for evil. She made herself the teacher and servant of the housekeeper's children, teaching them to read, looking after their education in other ways, and attending to them as if she were a hired nurse. At the same time she devoted herself wholeheartedly to the care of her father-in-law, surrounding him with attentions, and taking no notice of the ruggedness of his temper.

Her religion was her great help in these trials. She had obtained the old man's permission to arrange for the celebration of daily Mass at the château, and found ways of attending religious services at Autun whenever possible. Thus, during Lent, she would ride the nine miles that separated them from that town, in order to be present at the sermons of the Lenten station, and would get back home in time for the midday meal, so as to avoid giving M. de Chantal any cause for complaint.

For the rest, she worked continually either for the Church or for the poor, in accordance with a vow which she had made, never to be idle. This rule she observed whenever possible, even when entertaining the visitors who called at the house. Her hands were never idle. She also devoted herself unflinchingly to the service of the poor and the sick, reserving especially for her own attention those cases which were the most repulsive, and devoting herself to them with such a repression of all her own feelings that she never seemed so happy and so devoted as when engaged in the most difficult and nauseous duties.

It was not long before she became known and loved throughout the countryside for her goodness and charity. Her manifest excellence, as well as her natural graces, were also the cause of her receiving more than one brilliant offer of marriage. Strong, however, in her purpose of devoting herself henceforward solely to the direct service of God, she refused all such offers. It is even reported that, by way of emphasizing this devotion of her whole person to our Lord, she branded her breast with the holy name of Jesus by means of a red-hot iron.

Such, then, was the life of Mme. de Chantal until the year 1604. When the Bishop of Geneva went to Dijon for the Lenten station, President Frémiot, knowing how she would appreciate the sermons of so saintly an orator, sent her an invitation to come and stay with him, so that she could make use of such an excellent opportunity. The very first moment that St Jane Frances saw the Bishop in the pulpit, she recognized in him the ecclesiastic of her vision, whom God had promised to her as her director. In order to see him and study him more closely, she took her seat just opposite the pulpit, in such a way as almost to face the preacher. Francis, on his part, in spite of the preoccupation which the task of speaking gives to an orator, had not failed to notice the lady who attended his sermons so attentively and so regularly, and he had at once recognized her as the lady who, in his vision at Sales, had been represented to him as the cofounder of a new religious Order. Desirous, therefore, of discovering her identity, he addressed himself to André Frémiot, the Archbishop-elect of Bourges. The prelate replied that the lady in question was his sister, that, moreover, she was very desirous of making the acquaintance of the Bishop of Geneva, and that he himself would be very glad to introduce them to each other, if Francis would accept an invitation to dine with him. The Bishop accepted the invitation and thus met Jane Frances de Chantal for the first time at her brother's table, a meeting which soon resulted in other interviews. From the very first there was a perfect understanding between the two saints. The Baroness found just as much reason for admiration in the conversation of Francis de Sales as she had in his sermons, for, whether he spoke in private or in public, the love of God and the good of souls was his constant motive. The Bishop, on his part, recognized the virtue of this manifestly exceptional woman, and immediately proceeded to put her to the test, in order to discover the progress which the desire for perfection had already made in her conduct. He used the unerring touchstone of the trial of her humility. Having asked her if she had any intention of marrying again, he had received the emphatic answer: "No, certainly not." "Very well, then," he answered, pointing to certain simple ornamentations of her dress, "you ought to pull down the sign." Next day the superfluous decorations had disappeared. The Bishop was edified at such prompt obedience, but returned twice again to the charge, with a view of making sure of his first impression. First it was the lace that decorated her mantle, and then the harmless tassels that graced the ends of her collar-strings. Without the slightest delay both lace and tassels were suppressed.

Mme. de Chantal's brother, who had thus brought about her introduction to Francis, was the very same person to whom Henry IV had so absent-mindedly granted the benefices already conferred upon the Bishop of Geneva, and who had consequently been one of the parties in the lawsuit. Although still young, André Frémiot had given evidence that he was possessed of remarkable talents. His father had ensured to him an excellent education, he was well versed in literature, theology, civil and canon law, and had been elected Counsellor of the Burgundian parliament as well as Counsellor of State at the Court of Henry IV. Although not yet ordained a priest, he had, as we have seen, been nominated Archbishop of Bourges. It only needed a few interviews between him and Francis to show him the justice of the latter's claim to the benefices of Gex, the need in which the diocese of Geneva stood with regard to these funds, and the good to the propagation of the faith which would ensue from their rightful use. He gave up all claim to the disputed property. From this amicable agreement there naturally arose a strong friendship between the two ecclesiastics, a friendship in which President Frémiot also had a great share, and as Francis had very little time for friendly intercourse except his mealtimes, he often accepted their invitations to join them at their tables.

It had been decided that, after André Frémiot's ordination, he should say his first Mass on Holy Thursday, which fell that year on April 15. He was anxious that for this function Francis should fill the role of assistant priest, whose duty it is to watch over and guide the young celebrant on the first occasion that he offers up the Holy Sacrifice. To this request Francis acceded with the greatest pleasure. It will be remembered that on this day the Church allows the celebration of only one Mass in each church, and that if the clergy wish to receive the holy Eucharist, they must do so by way of Communion at this one Mass. Consequently, the Bishop of Geneva, when the time for Holy Communion arrived, presented himself at the altar-steps, to receive the body of our Lord. As he did so, God chose once again to give to all present an external miraculous sign of the heroic sanctity of this chosen servant. At the moment of receiving Communion the Bishop's head appeared to be crowned by rays of glory, and his face shone with a radiance as if his brow was encircled by a diadem of light.*

Mme. de Chantal was overjoyed at the friendship which was thus formed between her brother and the Bishop of Geneva, and took advantage of it for her own profit, as often as she could. Whenever Francis was dining at the house either of her father or of her brother, she took care to be present, in order to be able to talk with him under convenient circumstances. "Thenceforward," she afterwards wrote, "I had so deep an esteem for him, that I received all his words with incomparable respect, saying often to myself: 'In this man there is nought of the weakness of man.' I admired all that he did and said, and I looked upon him as an angel of God. The dignity and saintliness of his bearing touched me so much that I could not remove my eyes from watching him. His speech gave me no less edification: he spoke little, but in such a gentle manner, so apt to satisfy those who consulted him, that I knew of no happiness greater than that of being in his presence and of hearing the words of wisdom which came from his lips. And because of that, and in order to witness the sanctity of his actions, I would have considered myself only too happy if I had been the lowest of his servants."

Nevertheless, she did not as yet venture to confer with Francis about her spiritual state, much as she desired to do so, because of the vow which she had taken to consult no one else except her confessor of that time. This amazing person now subjected her to another inconvenience: he commissioned a certain person to keep watch over Mme. de Chantal and to prevent her seeking any other spiritual guidance. This last proceeding was so extraordinary as to make one doubt the man's sanity. It so happened, however, that for some reason or other he was obliged to absent himself from the neighbourhood at this time. During his absence Mme. de Chantal found herself assailed by one of those intellectual temptations which had already given her so much trouble, and which made consultation with someone an absolute necessity. She therefore begged her brother to arrange that she should have an interview with the Bishop of Geneva under circumstances which would keep it hidden from the lady who had undertaken the role of *surveillante.* This her brother effected, and from this first spiritual consultation the Baroness drew such profound peace of soul as to incline her more than ever towards the wish to make the Bishop of Geneva her ordinary director. The next day, which was Holy Thursday, she again had the happiness of speaking to Francis, next to whom she was seated at dinner, and of holding a long conversation with him after the guests had left the table. It was on this occasion that she began to see the meaning of the words about the gate of St Claud, which she had heard in spirit on a former occasion. She told the Bishop that she was proposing to go to St Claud on a pilgrimage. "And I also," answered Francis, "am obliged to go there with my mother, to fulfil a vow. If you will agree as to a date, we will go there at the same time." This answer filled Mme. de Chantal with joy, because she felt sure that in this way the prophecy would be fulfilled, and that through the gate of St Claud she would enter into the peace of the children of God.

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* Deposition of François Favre, of Mère de Chaugy, and St Jane Frances. de Chantal.

In the meanwhile, she begged the Bishop of Geneva to hear her confession. At first he refused, not seeing sufficient reason for her demand: but afterwards, on further consideration of the matter, he consented. On this occasion, while engaged in answering her difficulties, and giving her advice, he experienced such a manifest gift of illumination for her guidance, that he could no longer doubt that her coming to him for spiritual help was indeed the work of God, and that the Divine Providence had special designs upon this remarkable and saintly soul. Nevertheless, for the time being, he insisted on her remaining under the guidance of her former director.

At length Francis's work at Dijon came to an end, and he was engaged in making his preparations for departure, when a Huguenot minister, named Cassegrain, came to him with a manifestly hostile and insolent bearing and challenged him to a dispute. The Bishop, divining the man's intention and smiling at its foolishness, immediately took up the challenge, not, however, without a protest. "It would have been much better," he answered, "if you had done what you are doing now when I was more at my leisure, and when I was talking openly to the people. Perhaps, however, seeing me on the point of departure, you think that I will refuse you, and in this way you want to acquire a little honour out of my fear. You are, however, making a mistake. I am not so pressed in the matter of my going that I am not ready to answer your arguments and dispute on any subject you like." To this Cassegrain replied: "Sir, it is not my intention to delay you. Only, choose any day you like, and let us have a conference in Geneva: there we shall find every sort of book from which to draw the truth of our belief." "Oh, by all means!" answered Francis, "I shall be delighted. Let Geneva be the place of our disputation." Then, turning to Baron de Lux, who was present, he added: "Not only do I give my consent thereto, but, moreover, I beg Baron de Lux to be so kind as to arrange this excellent matter with the town of Geneva, to propose such conditions as he shall think suitable, and to which both parties shall be bound." Finally the Bishop called out aloud to all those who were present: "Gentlemen, I appeal to you as witnesses. Remember, if you please, that I promise M. Cassegrain to hold a conference and disputation on religion with him in the town of Geneva." As a matter of fact, Francis was delighted at the idea of having such a meeting at the headquarters of Calvinism and of putting before the people of Geneva a true version of Catholic doctrine, such as would serve as an antidote to the habitual misrepresentations which the people received from their ministers. Baron de Lux lost no time in fulfilling his commission, and set out for Geneva at once. There he used every effort to bring about the proposed meeting. The authorities of Geneva considered it in the fullest manner, even bringing it up for discussion at a meeting of the two hundred: but the outcome of all their deliberation was a refusal. They replied that their religion had no need of such discussions. This answer may have been eminently satisfactory for the people of Geneva: but it was most unfortunate for M. Cassegrain, who became thereby the object of much amused and witty comment on the part of the good folk of Dijon.*

It must not be imagined that the Saint was an indiscriminate accepter of these challenges. He received many such: he did not always take them up. His views on the point are found in a letter written in all probability about this time to another Calvinist. "Sir, I had no design of entering upon any conference with you: the approaching necessity of my departure quite takes from me any opportunity for such. If conferences are not undertaken under favourable circumstances, accompanied by leisure, and with a prospect of being brought to a definite conclusion, they are fruitless. I seek only the glory of God and the salvation of my neighbour: where these are not procurable, I undertake no conferences." After answering two or three points, evidently suggested by his correspondent, he writes: "It would not be possible to carry on conferences between us by writing with any profit: we are separated from each other by too great a distance. And what could we write which has not been repeated a hundred times? If circumstances permitted it, believe me, I would not refuse it, any more than I shall refuse it to the ministers of Geneva, my neighbours, when they ask for it in suitable times."†

* C. A. de S., l. vi, p. 385 *et seq.*

† E.N., Lettre CCXIX, Tom. XII.

A day or two after the encounter with Cassegrain, Francis received a visit from the aldermen of the city, who came to express their thanks to him for the great work which he had accomplished amongst them, and to present him with a rich service in silver as a memento of their gratitude. The Bishop thanked them for their courtesy, but was firm in his refusal to accept any remuneration at their hands. "Gentlemen," he said, "I cannot accept this present. I did not come amongst you to sell the Word of God, and I desire to carry away with me hence nought but the gift of your hearts."*

How deeply he had entered into the affections of the people of Dijon was made manifest on the day of his departure. This was April 26, the Monday in Low week. So great was the emotion of the people that a noble lady, who witnessed it, was heard to allude to the Bishop as a thief, who was robbing them all of their hearts, to bear them away with him to Annecy. Some of the crowd even went so far as to take out the horses from his carriage. "No, my Lord," they cried out. "You must not leave us yet. Or if, indeed, it must be so, we will carry you in our arms to Annecy itself." Clergy, town councillors, magistrates of the parliament, nobility, people of all ranks, whom he had influenced either to join the Church or to lead a new life—all these now crowded around him and escorted him to the great open place of St Stephen, where an enormous concourse of townsfolk had gathered to wish him God speed. At the moment when he appeared in their midst, the whole of the vast crowd fell upon its knees, and cried out for his blessing. With this farewell gesture he left them and passed on towards the country of Gex. For the first stage of his journey, as far as the town of Beaune, he was accompanied by ten of the city fathers and by other distinguished citizens, who wished, by so doing, to give him a last sign of their veneration and gratitude.

None amongst those who were so grieved at the Bishop's departure were affected as deeply as Baroness de Chantal. To be thrown back once more upon her own spiritual resources, to face the mental temptations which assailed her with only the help of an inefficient director, to go on waiting indefinitely for that clear call from God which she so much desired—all this left her in a state of utter desolation. The Bishop, however, had not forgotten her and had divined the condition of her mind. From the first stopping-place on his way home he sent her a short message. "God, it seems to me, has given me to you. I am more strongly assured of it every hour. This is all that I can say to you. Recommend me to your good Angel."† On receiving these words Mme. de Chantal experienced a great consolation, and was able to resign herself to await in peace and patience the ultimate manifestation of God's will in her regard.

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* C. A. de Sales, l. vi, p. 387.

† E.N., Tom. XII, Lettre CCXV, p. 262,

CHAPTER XIX*

(1604–1605)

Correspondence with the Abbess of Puits-d'Orbe, Mme. de Brulart, the Archbishop of Bourges, and President Frémiot—Francis falls sick—Lenten station at La Roche—Conferences with the clergy—Death of Clement VIII—Leo XI intends to make Francis a cardinal—Death of Leo and accession of Paul V—Francis writes to the new Pope—Third diocesan synod and its regulations—The Saint founds Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament—Renewed challenge to the ministers of Geneva—Final work in Chablais

BEFORE passing on to a description of the next incidents which took place in the life of our Saint, it is well to take notice of a correspondence which was the direct result of the Bishop's activities in Dijon. Amongst the numbers of friends whom he made in that city was M. Bourgeois de Crépy, President of the parliament, who, not content with the ordinary intercourse of friendship, was anxious to avail himself also of the wisdom of the Saint's counsels. One of his daughters, Rose Bourgeois, was Abbess of Puits-d'Orbe, situated in the bailiwick of Auxois, on the borders of Burgundy and Champagne. " It is probable," notes Dom Mackey, " that, in accordance with an abuse common at the time, her position of younger sister had, by the will of her father, taken the place of a real vocation to the religious life. Nevertheless, touched by the exhortations of St Francis de Sales, she resolved to reform, not only her own private life, but also her abbey."† M. de Crépy himself had written to the Bishop of Geneva and begged his assistance. The latter, in spite of the press of business given to him by the diocese, consented to do what he could, and the result was a series of admirable letters which give the principles guiding the Bishop in his direction of religious. It is impossible to quote them here in full, but we give those passages of one particular letter chosen by M. Hamon as being particularly worthy of transcription. These were written from Sales on October 9, 1604.

" I am sending to you, my dear daughter (which is the name you desire and which my own heart dictates to me), a writing, dealing with that method of mental prayer which seems to me the easiest and most useful. I have also added to it several other exercises and some ejaculatory prayers. This will be sufficient to instruct you in the dispositions to be maintained during the course of the day. I ask you to pass it on to your sister and to Mme. de Chantal, for I think it will be useful to them.

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* Hamon, l. iv, chap. iv.

† E.N., vol. xii, p. 271. Note to Lettre CCXVIII.

"As to the matter of your meditations, I desire that these should ordinarily be on the life and death of our Lord, for such are the easiest and most profitable.

"Always begin your prayer by placing yourself in the presence of God, invoking him and putting before your mind the mystery you have chosen. When you have meditated on the subject, always elicit acts of the affections, not upon each consideration but upon some, and make resolutions. After that, your thanksgiving, offering, and prayer. Finally, read carefully the little memorandum which I am sending to you, and put it into practice.

"As to meditations on death, judgement, and hell, these will be very useful to you, and you will find plentiful material for such in Granada. But, my daughter, I beg you, let all these meditations on the Four Last Things end, each one of them, with hope and confidence in God and not with fear and terror, for when they finish with fear they are dangerous, especially those upon death and hell.

"And always keep this for a rule, that you ought never to finish your prayer except in the spirit of confidence, for it is the virtue most requisite for petitioning Almighty God, and the one which honours him the most. You might, then, make these meditations on the Four Last Things once every three months, and that in four days.

"As regards the order of prayer during the day, it seems to me that I have given you sufficient instruction in the little memorandum which I have sent to you. Nevertheless, I will describe it to you here with slightly more detail. Knowing that you rise very early, I say that in the morning, as soon as you are up, you ought to make your meditation and the morning exercise which I have called preparation for the day (*préparation à la charge*); and that the whole should, at the longest, last no more than three-quarters of an hour, as I do not wish that your meditation and exercise should take up a full hour. After that you can dispose of your business for the day until Office-time, if there be leisure enough.

"At Mass I advise you to say your Rosary rather than any other vocal prayer, and while saying it, you can interrupt it, when it is necessary, to observe the points which I have marked at the Gospel, the Creed, and the Elevation, and can continue it afterwards where you left off.

"And have no doubt but that it will only be said the better for all these interruptions; if you cannot finish it during Mass, you can do so at some other time in the day, and it will only be necessary to continue it from the point where you left off.

"A short time before supper it would be very useful for you to spend some six or seven minutes in a reconsideration of the morning's meditation, unless at that hour you say Compline at the convent.

"For the rest, my dear lady, it is necessary that you, first of all, and then the others, should observe a regular order, not only for the Offices, but also for going to bed and for getting up: otherwise you will not be able to continue in good health, a fact proved by experience in every community. Staying up late at night is bad for head and stomach. I would advise that dinner be not later than ten o'clock, supper no later than six, and bedtime no later than between nine and ten. You should rise between four and five o'clock. There may be cases where some may need more sleep and some may not be able to sleep for so long. But for shortening the hours of sleep the reason must be convincing: for with young girls it would seem that six hours is absolutely necessary, and if they are given less, they show a want of energy during the whole of the day.*

"Do not attempt mental prayer after dinner—at any rate, not within four hours of it, nor ever after supper. On fasting days you can take your collation at seven o'clock. With regard to fasting, for yourself, it will be sufficient to begin with Fridays and to be satisfied with that for some time, and also because it is necessary that you should be with the others and because it is needful to lead them on little by little.

"But when you are ill, make use of no other form of prayer but ejaculations, and take care of yourself, carefully obeying the physician. Realize that this is a mortification pleasing to God. When your Sisters are ill, make a point of visiting them, helping them, seeing that they are well looked after, and comforting them. Likewise, if there are some who are chronic invalids,† show them the gentlest compassion, dispensing them easily from the duties of the office, according as you shall judge suitable; for this will infallibly gain them to you.

"With regard to Communion and Confession, I find it good that this should be weekly, and that on Saturday evening you should add to the *Visita* the prayer to the Blessed Sacrament. I am sending a little formulary for confession, which I have drawn up expressly for you.

"As to the reformation of your house, my dear daughter, you must keep up a great and persevering heart. Here is what I think. The exact reformation of a convent of women consists in well-kept obedience, poverty, and chastity. You must take great care not to give the slightest inkling that you intend to introduce reforms: for that would cause all those who are touchy to take up arms against you and to offer resistance. Do you know what must be done? They themselves must effect their own reformation under your guidance and must bind themselves to obedience and poverty. But how? Aim to make a gradual progress, gain over the young plants which are there, and inspire them with the spirit of obedience. To do this, make use of three or four innocent expedients.

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* Most medical men of to-day are scarcely satisfied with prescribing a minimum of eight hours. Perhaps the greater strain and speed of modern life demand this.

† The Saint uses the word *maladive*, and the context seems to refer to such as do not enjoy very good health but who are inclined to exaggerate their ailments.

"The first is to give them frequent commands, but only with regard to small, easy, and slight tasks, and to do this in the presence of others: and thereupon, to bestow some little praise upon them, and call them to obedience with words of love: *My dear sister* or *daughter*, and so on. Before giving them some command, say to them: *If I ask this or that of you, you will do it, I am sure, for the love of God.*

"The second is to put in their way books that will help them in this obedience. . . .

"The third is to give your commands so gently and affectionately as to make obedience likeable, and, after they have obeyed you, add: *May God reward you for your obedience.* And this will keep you yourself in all humility.

"The fourth is to declare openly that you do nothing without the advice and counsel of your spiritual father, to whom, nevertheless, you will by no means attribute any right of command, nor will you apply to what you do by his direction any title of obedience, lest you raise up contradictions and lest the evil one should incite jealousies in the minds of those who are the superiors of your convent: for that would spoil everything. And I have some experience in such accidents, having seen them happen in France, in monasteries in which the stilling of these storms caused no little trouble.

"I would say the same of poverty. You must lead them to it little by little, in such a way that, inspired in this gentle manner, all their incomes will in a short time be placed in the common fund, from which will be drawn all that shall be necessary, impartially and suitably, according to the need of each, such as is done in several monasteries of France that I know of. But, nevertheless, you must not arouse any alarm about all this, but must guide them by gentle and mild suggestions. For this purpose also the books I have mentioned will be useful. . . ."

The Saint then makes suggestions as to the means of ensuring the enclosure of the convent, by lessening the number of visits from people in the world, and by gradually introducing a strict rule, prohibiting the sisters from leaving the convent for the purpose of visiting their friends outside, which was a fruitful cause of trouble and scandal. He then goes on:

"I am consoled to learn that almost all your Sisters are young, for that age is more suitable for the reception of impressions. At the monastery of Montmartre, near Paris, the young Sisters, with their still younger Abbess, effected the reformation of their house.

"When you meet with difficulties and contradictions, do not strive to break them, but turn aside skilfully and give way: have patience, with the use of gentleness and time, if all do not show good dispositions, and advance as much as you can with the others. Give no sign of wanting to gain the upper hand. Make excuses for the angularity of the one and the age of the other, and as far as possible refrain from accusing them of a want of obedience. But tell me, do you think it is so very little—what you have already done with regard to the Office, the refectory, the veil, and such-like matters? Good heavens! Our Lord spent three years and a half in forming the college of his twelve Apostles, and even so there was found amongst them one traitor and many imperfections when he died. You must have a persevering courage. Great designs are only accomplished by dint of patience and the passage of time. Things which grow in a day die the next day. Courage, then, my good daughter, God will be with you."

The Bishop then deals with a special case—that of a Sister who had apparently made shipwreck of her religious life—agreeing with the Abbess that a policy of reconciliation and mercy would be advisable in this instance, provided there was evidence of true repentance. He then continues:

"I think it well that the examination of conscience should not be made until a good half-hour or three-quarters of an hour after supper, and that, during the three-quarters, the Sisters should take a little recreation, passing the time in harmless conversation, or perhaps in singing sacred music, at least for this beginning of things.

"Your young girls ought to make their first communion, at the very latest, at the age of eleven, presupposing that they have the usual knowledge of their years. And the first time that they communicate, it would be well that you yourself undertake the trouble of giving them a thorough instruction as to the reverence they ought to have for the Blessed Sacrament. Bid them make a note of the day and the year in their breviaries, in order that they may thank God for this favour every passing year."

Of the ultimate results of these counsels and of the Abbess's attempts to reform her Abbey we learn in Dom Mackey's note, from which we have already quoted. "Opposition from within and unfavourable influence from without brought about the failure of this project. The removal of the community to Châtillon-sur-Seine (December 21, 1619) also failed to restore the desired regularity. Afterwards, the irresolution of the Abbess and her insubordination against the Bishop of Langres, in whose diocese the Abbey was situated, complicated the difficulties to a further extent. More successful than Rose Bourgeois, Jeanne de Chauvigny de St Agoulin, who followed her, succeeded in bringing back to the convent its prosperity and fervour."*

Another series of letters was written to the sister of the Abbess of Puits-d'Orbe—Mme. Marie Brulart, wife of Nicholas Brulart, a president of the Burgundian parliament. These letters show the perfect wisdom which Francis displayed in guiding a woman of the world and his faculty of adapting his advice to the peculiarities of each case. As he said of himself: "I am not an extremist. I am ever very much inclined to mitigate that which is susceptible of mitigation, when circumstances so demand." We will only quote his letter of May 3, 1604.

"You have a great desire for Christian perfection. It is, indeed, the most generous desire that you can possibly have: nourish and develop it every day. The means of arriving at perfection vary according to the diversity of vocations: for religious, widows, and married people must all seek after perfection, but not by the same means. For you, madame, who are married, the means of perfection are to unite yourself thoroughly to God and to your neighbour and to that which is dependent upon them.

"The means by which you are to unite yourself to God must be principally the use of the sacraments and prayer. As to the use of the sacraments, you must on no account allow any month to pass by without going to communion, and even, in a short time, according to the progress you will have made in the service of God and according to the advice of your confessors, you will be able to communicate oftener. But as to confession, I would advise you to go still more frequently, especially if you chance to commit some imperfection, to the vexation of your conscience—a thing which happens very often at the beginning of the spiritual life. Nevertheless, if you have no suitable opportunity for confession, contrition and repentance will supply the need.

"As to prayer, you must give yourself to it very frequently, especially to meditation, for which, it seems to me, you are particularly qualified. Every day, therefore, devote a short hour to this exercise in the morning before going out, or perhaps before supper, but see that you never undertake it after dinner or after supper, for that would be injurious to your health. And in order to help you to do this well, it is necessary, as a preliminary, that you should know the point on which you are to meditate, in order that, when you begin your prayer, you may have your matter ready. And for this purpose you must have the authors who have written out points of meditation upon the life and death of our Lord, such as Granada, Bellintani, Capiglia, Bruno, in whom you will choose the meditation you wish to make.

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* E.N., Tom. XII, p. 272. Note to Lettre CCXVIII.

Read this attentively, in order that it may be present in your memory at the time of your prayer, and that you may have nothing else to do but revolve it again in your mind, following out every day the method which I gave you on Maundy Thursday.

"In addition to this, frequently offer up ejaculatory prayers to our Lord, and this at any time that you can and in the midst of any company, ever seeing God in your heart and your heart in God. Make it one of your pleasures to read the books which Granada has written on prayer and meditation, for there is no one who can instruct you better or with greater unction. I would wish that no day should pass by without your having devoted half an hour or an hour to the reading of some spiritual book, for this would serve you instead of sermons.

"Such, then, are the principal means of attaining to a close union with God.

"As to those which serve the same purpose with regard to your neighbour, there are a great number, but I will only speak of a few. We must consider our neighbour in God who wishes us to love and cherish him. This is the counsel of St Paul, who orders servants to serve God in their masters and their masters in God. We must exercise this love of our neighbour, making our affection manifest by our actions; and although we may at first feel that this is against the grain, we must not give up on that account, for this repugnance of our lower natures will be eventually overcome by habit and by the good inclination which results from a repetition of acts. We ought to bring our prayers and meditations to bear upon this point, for, after having asked for the love of God, we must always ask for the love of our neighbour, and particularly of those for whom our will experiences no inclination.

"I advise you to take the trouble sometimes to visit the hospitals, to console the sick, to consider their infirmities, to bring your heart into sympathy with them, and to pray for them, rendering them assistance at the same time. But in all this take the greatest care that your husband, your servants, your relatives, are given no subject for vexation by overlong visits to the church, by excessive withdrawals from company, by neglect of your household duties, or, as happens sometimes, by becoming critical of the actions of others or too condemnatory of those conversations, in which the rules of devotion are not so exactly observed; for in all these things charity must rule and enlighten us, in order to make us condescend to the wishes of our neighbour in all that is not contrary to the commandments of God.

"Not only should you be devout yourself and love piety, but you should make it lovable to all others. Now you will make it lovable, if you make it useful and agreeable.

"Sick people will love your devotion, if they are comforted in a charitable manner; your family, if it recognizes that you are more careful of its concerns, gentler in the emergencies of everyday life, more sympathetic in your method of correcting and so on; your husband, if he sees that with the growth of your piety you are more affectionate towards him and sweeter in the love you show him; your relatives and friends, if they see in you more sincerity, more patience, more agreement with such of their wishes as are not contrary to those of God. Briefly, we should, as far as possible, make our piety attractive

"I have written a little instruction on the subject of the perfection of the Christian life, of which I am sending you a copy and which I want passed on to Mme. du Puy-d'Orbe. Accept it in good part, as also this letter, which comes from a soul entirely devoted to your spiritual good, and desires nothing further than to see the work of God made perfect in your mind."*

In another letter, speaking of the need we have of being satisfied with our condition and of striving to do God's will in it, he writes: "You must remember that there is no vocation which has not its worries, its bitterness, and its disappointments; and, what is more, except for those are who fully resigned to the will of God, each one would willingly exchange his state of life for that of others: those who are bishops, wish they were not; those who are married, wish they were not married, and those who are not married, wish they were. Whence comes this general restlessness of mind except from a certain displeasure which we feel at any constraint, and a certain disease of our intellects which makes us think that everybody else is better off than we are? . . ." Further on the Bishop writes: "We must not only want to do the will of God, but, in order to be truly religious, we must do it cheerfully (*il la faut faire gayement*). If I were not a bishop, it is possible that, knowing what I do know, I would not want to be one: but, being one, not only am I obliged to do what this irksome vocation requires, but I must do it joyfully, must find my pleasure in it, and must be content therein."†

There is one letter in this group which is so long as to be rather a treatise than a letter. It was written at the request of André Frémiot, Archbishop of Bourges, and was devoted wholly and entirely to the subject of sermons. The writer divided it mainly under four heads: the preacher; the object or end of preaching; the matter of the sermon; and the manner in which it should be delivered. Of the duty of bishops in this matter of preaching, he says: "Let me remark that bishops not only have the mission to preach, but they are its ministerial source: other preachers are but the streams therefrom. It is their first and great duty: they are so told during their consecration, and it is during their consecration that they receive a special grace for this purpose. . . ." Dealing with the necessary knowledge, he says: "As to learning, it is necessary that this should be sufficient, and not that it should be eminent or exceptional. St Francis was not learned, and was nevertheless a great and good preacher. In our own times the Blessed Cardinal Borromeo was possessed of a very moderate amount of learning: nevertheless he did wonders. I know of a hundred similar cases. . . . I would like to say just this word: a preacher always knows enough so long as he does not try to appear more learned than he actually is. If we do not know enough to talk well about the mystery of the Trinity, then let us not talk about it at all. If we are not sufficiently well-read to explain the *In principio* of St John, then let us leave it alone. There is no lack of other and more useful material. It is not a question of our being able to do everything." He then goes on to treat of the excellence of life needed by bishops and preachers, setting before his correspondent a very high and severe standard. With regard to the end and object of the preacher he writes: "His object and intention should be to do what our Lord came into the world to do, and this is what he himself says of that: *I am come that they may have life and may have it more abundantly.** The preacher's object, then, is that sinners who are dead in sin may live to justice, and that the just, who possess spiritual life within them, may have it yet more abundantly, and become more and more perfect. . . . When, therefore, the preacher is in the pulpit, he ought to say within his heart: *I am come that they may have life and may have it more abundantly.*

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* E.N., Tom. XII, Lettre CCXVII, p. 267.

† *Ibid.*, Lettre CCXXXIII, pp. 348-9.

"Now, to accomplish this intention and design, he must do two things: he must teach and he must touch. He must teach the virtues and the vices: the virtues, to make them loved; the vices, to make them hated, combated, and avoided. It is, in a word, to give light to the understanding and energy to the will. . . . I know that for a third thing some people say that a preacher must delight his audience. As to myself, I would distinguish, and would say that there is a certain pleasure which follows in the train of good doctrine and good emotion. . . . And this kind of pleasure should be supplied: but it is not really distinct from teaching and moving, as it depends upon these. There is, however, another sort of pleasure, derived from sermons, which does not depend upon good doctrine and good emotion, but which has an altogether independent existence and often hinders both teaching and moving. This is a certain tickling of the ears, proceeding from a secular, worldly, and profane elegance, from certain curiosities, or from a certain engineering of points, sayings, and words —in short, such as depends entirely upon art: and as to this, I deny, hard and fast, that a preacher ought ever to think of it. . . . St Paul detests those listeners who have *itching ears*, and consequently, also, those preachers who strive to delight them. It is pedantry. When people leave the church after a sermon, I would not have them say—*Oh, what a great preacher he is! What a memory! What learning! How well he speaks!* but I would have them exclaim—*What a beautiful thing is repentance! How necessary it is! My God, how good thou art, how just!* And so on."

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* John x 10.

Regarding the subject-matter of sermons the Saint writes: "St Paul says in one short expression to his disciple Timothy—*Preach the word.* We must preach the word of God. *Preach the Gospel*, says the Master." Francis goes on to recommend the Doctors of the Church because they are the best interpreters of the Gospel, and he likewise approves of stories from the lives of the Saints, because these lives are the Gospel put into practice. As to the use of stories from secular life or history, he advises caution, though he does not condemn it altogether, as he does the employment of the heathen fables of the poets. As might be deduced from his own usage, he strongly approves of the use of natural history. "For," he writes, "the world, made by the word of God, gives witness to that word in every direction. All its parts are ever singing the praises of the Artisan." He ends this portion of his letter by saying—"But, above all, let the preacher carefully refrain from narrating dubious miracles and ridiculous stories, such as certain visions taken from authors of inferior authority, things which are unbecoming and which might expose our ministry to abuse and contempt." After developing these points at greater length and devoting much space to the interpretation of Scripture, he passes on to the question of method, which he praises thus: "Method must be observed in all things. There is nothing which gives more help to the preacher, renders his sermons more practical, and gives greater satisfaction to the hearer. I approve of making one's method clear and manifest, not hiding it in any way, as do some preachers, who think that it is a master-stroke to work in such a way that no one shall recognize their plan."

Later on he treats of the manner in which the sacred orator should deliver his sermons. "How should we speak," he asks, "when preaching? We must take care to refrain from the *quamquams* and long periods of pedants, from their gestures, from their tricks of facial expression, from their motions. All that sort of thing is the plague of preaching. One's action should be free, noble, generous, simple, strong, holy, grave, and somewhat slow. But in order to obtain this, what must we do? In one word, speak with feeling and devotion, with simplicity, candour, and confidence. Be in love with the doctrine which you are teaching and urging upon your hearers. The supreme art is to have no art. Our words must be enkindled, not by exaggerated shouts and actions, but by an inner love: they must come from the heart rather than from the mouth. Say what you will, the heart speaks to the heart: the tongue speaks but to the ear." During his development of this part of his treatise, he gives an amusing category of the commonest faults found amongst pulpit orators, such as reveals his own strong sense of humour and his keen powers of observation. His charity never made him blind or deprived him of his power of just criticism.

The last four paragraphs of the instructive portion of this letter deserve quotation in full, so replete are they with the spirit of his own teaching and practice.

"As to the preparation of your sermons, I approve of its being made during the course of the previous evening, and that in the morning you should meditate for your own benefit on what you are going to say to others. 'Preparation made before the Blessed Sacrament,' says Granada, 'has a great force': and this I believe.

"I like preaching which breathes rather the love of one's neighbour than indignation against him. And this is true even of the Huguenots, not flattering them indeed, but pitying them.

"It is always better that preaching should be short rather than long, in which I myself have failed up to the present: a thing I must correct. Provided that it lasts a half-hour, it cannot be too short.

"One ought not to betray dissatisfaction, if possible: but at any rate, no anger, as I did on the feast of our Lady, when they rang the bell before I had finished. It was a fault, doubtless not the only one. I do not like jokes and nicknames in the pulpit: it is not the place for such."

The letter ends with a vehement exhortation that the Archbishop should at once devote himself earnestly to his duty of preaching and an affectionate passage, in which the depth of the Bishop's friendship is put forward as his apology for the liberty of his language.*

President Frémiot had the same veneration for Francis de Sales as his son, the Archbishop of Bourges, and his daughter, the Baroness de Chantal; and he had besought the Bishop to give him advice as to the manner in which he should prepare for death. In answer to this request the first thing which Francis recommended to his aged friend was purity of soul. "The ancient fathers, Abraham and the others," he wrote, "offered to their guests before aught else the washing of the feet: I think, sir, that the first thing which we ought to do is to wash the affections of our soul, in order to receive the hospitality of our good God in his paradise." He then recommends detachment of spirit from the things of the world, because, according to him, the rupture ought to be prepared a long time in advance: we ought to bid farewell to the world gently and in good time, withdraw our hearts gradually, little by little, from creatures, and, in proportion as we thus free them from these ties, carry them on towards heaven. Thirdly, we should see that our affairs are in order. "We must hold ourselves in readiness," he said, "not in order to depart before our time, but in order to await that time with more tranquillity." For this reason he urges that the President should devote an hour each day to the reflection of what is needed, in order to ensure a happy departure from the world. "I know," he said, "that these thoughts will not be new to you. But the manner in which you make use of them should be new, placing yourself in the presence of God with tranquillity and attention, intent rather on moving the affections than in enlightening the intellect. After recommending his friend to read the treatise of St Ambrose on the *Happiness of Death* and that of St Bernard on the *Inner House*, he ends with these quaintly humble words: "Here then, sir, is water: even though it comes from the jawbone of an ass, Samson will not neglect to drink therefrom."*

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* E.N., Tom. XII, Lettre CCXXIX, p. 299 *et seq.*

All this time the Bishop was also carrying on a continued correspondence with Baroness de Chantal, but with this we shall deal elsewhere.

During the rest of the year 1604 Francis continued to devote himself to the work of his episcopal office. As soon as he returned from Dijon, he presided over his second synod, and then journeyed into the country of Gex, where the exercise of the Catholic religion had been greatly harassed by the Huguenots. In spite of this opposition, however, a number of parishes were asking for a resident priest. Towards the end of August he went to St Claude with his mother and his sister Jeanne, thus fulfilling a vow made some time before. Of this pilgrimage we shall give further details on another occasion. Other labours were the preparation of the reform needed by the Abbey of Abondance, the sustaining of a lawsuit with regard to the parish of Allinges against the Provost of Montjoux, who claimed the right of nominating to this benefice, and the termination of another lawsuit between the inhabitants of Veyrier, near Annecy, and the collegiate chapter of Notre Dame de Liesse.

The execution of these duties proved too much for his health, and during the month of January, 1605, he was prostrated by a fever, during the course of which he was nursed by his devoted mother. The sickness seems to have made any work, beyond letter writing, quite impossible for more than a month. By February 18, however, he had evidently recovered, for he left Annecy on that date to spend a couple of days at Sales. On Sunday, February 20, he left his home and made his way afoot to the little town of La Roche, where he was to preach the Lenten course. The Canons of the collegiate church of the town, accompanied by the syndics, came to meet him as he drew near his destination; on entering La Roche, his first visit was made to the church, whence he afterwards walked to the house of the parish priest. It was here that he stayed during the whole of Lent, although, in order not to be a burden to the curé, he insisted on paying his own expenses.*

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* E.N., Tom. XII, Lettre CCXXX, p. 326.

The people of La Roche felt that they had a special claim upon the Saint, because of the fact that he had undergone part of his early education in their college. They were certainly prepared to pay him especial reverence, and held him in the deepest affection. It was now only a few months ago since he had paid them a visit, when in November M. Pierre Marquet had inaugurated a restoration of the college, of which apparently that establishment then stood in need. On this occasion the Bishop had had to listen to a discourse in which the Principal held him up for the admiration of all, as a former student of the school. M. Marquet had described him as the protector of the Muses, the Mæcenas of the friends of literature, the wisest and most perfect of all men, free of all unevenness of temper or other weaknesses, always gentle and calm, the wonderful type of the richest intellectual talent and of all the moral and Christian virtues.

Francis applied himself to his work in La Roche with just the same energy that he had devoted to the great cities. In spite of his recent illness, he continued his usual rule of fasting and penance, but his austerities were never allowed to hinder him in his work of preaching. He overcame the weakness of his body by the strength of his soul. He devoted himself unsparingly to the evangelization of the townsfolk, speaking to them in homely but moving language of the great eternal truths and persuading them to fix their minds upon that which was vital and lasting rather than upon the innumerable follies of their transitory life in the world. In addition to his work of preaching, he also undertook to hear the confessions of all who wished to come to him in the tribunal of penance, devoting himself especially to those who were most unfortunate. On Tuesdays and Fridays he allotted a considerable part of his time to visiting the sick, and on Wednesdays and Fridays gave catechetical instructions after compline. He did not, however, restrict his attention to the people. Twice every week, on Mondays and Fridays, he held conferences for the clergy, to which all the canons, parish priests and other ecclesiastics of the neighbourhood were invited. At these he would give lectures on moral theology, applying its principles to the most practical cases of conscience; would give instructions on the ceremonial of the Liturgy; invited the statement of difficulties which he would resolve, as far as possible, with his usual patience and clearness; and would finally conclude the session by an eloquent exhortation on the true ecclesiastical spirit or the duties and virtues of the priesthood. A great proportion of the neighbouring clergy came willingly to these meetings, listening with the greatest attention to the practical wisdom and lofty ideals of their bishop, and finding it easy to obey the directions of a pastor who himself practised all that he preached. There were, however, a few superior spirits who considered that such instructions were unnecessary in their case, and who scorned to place themselves once more in the attitude of pupils. The Bishop never took umbrage in these cases, but confined himself to begging the priests of the conference that they would use their influence to bring all their clerical brethren with them to these gatherings. It was essential that the clergy should gather together on occasions, not only for the purpose of instruction, but in order to foster a spirit of unity, and to organize a system of mutual help, which would be invaluable in the work of their mission. On Sundays the Bishop conferred the Sacrament of Confirmation shortly after midday, and he also held no less than three ordinations. It was at one of these, on April 9, that Georges Rolland received the priesthood at the hands of his beloved master and friend.*

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* *Journal* (Gonthier), February 20, 1605, p. 35.

During his stay at La Roche the Bishop made an addition to his household. This was a poor man, named Martin, who had been deaf and dumb from his birth, and whose only means of gaining a livelihood was the undertaking of small domestic jobs in any house that could find him such occupation. Touched by the man's misfortune, the Bishop conceived the idea of taking him into permanent service. Needless to say, there were some who expostulated with Francis on learning his intention. "Why should you burden yourself," they said, "with a man who will be practically useless?" "He will help me to practise the virtue of charity," answered the Bishop. "The more God has afflicted him, the more ought I to have pity on him. If we were in his place, would we like other people to be so stingy towards us?" Francis at once undertook the poor man's education in religion. By means of signs and with the exercise of great patience, he was able to instruct Martin sufficiently well to help the latter make his first confession, and to make it possible for him to go to communion during the Easter festivities.†

It was during this period that Francis received news of the death of Clement VIII. This was a bitter loss to the Saint, as it was to the whole Church, for the Pope had proved himself a great friend to the diocese of Geneva, had interested himself very greatly in the progress of the faith in Chablais, and had even been so generous as to supply funds from his own resources for the maintenance of the Jesuit fathers at Thonon.

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* *Journal* (Gonthier), p. 15.

† C. A. de S., l. vi, p. 399. Father de la Rivière gives a long account. See Pérennès, l. vi, chap. vi, p. 192 of vol. ii.

On April 3 Cardinal Alexander de Medicis was elected Pope by the conclave and took the title of Leo XI. This was the prelate who, while journeying from France to Italy, after acting in the former country as papal Legate, had accompanied the Duke of Savoy at the celebration of the Quarant' Ore at Thonon. He was, therefore, well acquainted with the Bishop of Geneva, and, so great was his esteem for the Saint, that one of the first acts of his pontificate was to include the name of Francis de Sales amongst those whom he intended to raise to the dignity of Cardinal. News of the Pope's intention reached the Bishop of Geneva by means of a letter from Rome. Far from giving him any pleasure, it only caused him anxiety. It happened that about this time the chaplain of the château of Sales had come to see him for some reason or other: as he was on the point of departure, Francis said to him: " Tell my mother to pray and conjure Almighty God not to raise me to a higher dignity: that which I bear is already too heavy for my shoulders." On another occasion he remarked: " I pray God to remove this dignity from me, for I do not deserve it. If His Holiness commands it, one must obey: but I assure you that if the matter depended on me, and if there were only three paces between myself and the cardinal's hat, I would not move a foot to get it. Alas! would that my robes might be made red rather with my own blood, shed for the conversion of heretics!" The deep emotion with which he uttered these words convinced his hearers that they were uttered with all the sincerity of his soul.

Leo XI, however, did not live to put his intentions into execution. He died within a month of his coronation, and was succeeded by Cardinal Borghese, with the title of Paul V. Mgr. Camus makes an interesting remark with regard to this matter of the cardinalate, which may possibly explain why Francis did not receive this dignity at the hands of the new Pope, who, the writer avers, had the greatest appreciation for the Saint's eminent qualities. The Bishop of Belley suggests that the reason why so many distinguished Italians and men of other races were not raised to the cardinalate was because the lesser princes were averse to any of their subjects receiving the princely rank attached to that dignity, as it created difficulties in connection with their own precedence, about the rights of which they were intensely jealous.*

The new Pope was well known to Francis de Sales. He was one of the prelates who had used his influence in behalf of the mission of the Provost of Geneva, when the latter had gone to Rome to represent Mgr. de Granier, in connection with the various difficulties occasioned by the conversion of Chablais. Accordingly Francis thought well to write to the new Pontiff, congratulating him upon his election, and begging his special protection for a diocese which was exposed to attack from the greatest of all the strongholds of Protestantism.

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* *Esprit*, Part IV, Sect 4. C. A. de S., l. vi, p. 404. *Année*, Avril 18. Hamon also quotes D. Jean de S. F., p. 421; De Maupas, p. 250; Pérennès quotes De Cambis, Tom. I, p. 549.

On the Wednesday of the second week of Easter (April 27, 1605) the Bishop held his third synod. His first act in this assembly was to renew the publication of the constitutions passed on the former occasions—constitutions which, he was obliged to admit, had not been observed by a number of the clergy. Then he added several new statutes to the diocesan regulations. Those holding benefices that included the cure of souls were reminded of the obligations of residence. Priests were forbidden to exorcise those possessed by the devil without the Bishop's permission, or to perform the exorcisms anywhere but in the churches: they were also forbidden to preach, or to allow others to preach in their churches, without written authorization. The faithful were forbidden to fulfil their Paschal duties outside their own parish, unless they obtained the leave of their parish priest: this permission, however, was to be granted without any enquiries into the reason therefor. The curés were forbidden to alienate Church property or to institute legal proceedings against their parishioners, without first seeking the advice of the archpriest. The Bishop authorized confessors to give absolution to those who, forced to live amongst heretics by the necessity of gaining a livelihood, had failed to observe the fasts of the Church and the laws of abstinence. He made rules for the settlement of certain quarrels, which used to arise between the parish priests and the parishioners, as to the possession of the shroud and the candles used at funerals. He also issued regulations about the service of chapels.*

It will be remembered that at the first synod he had ordered the recitation on every free Thursday of the office of the Blessed Sacrament by way of reparation for the insults levelled by the Calvinists against the holy Eucharist. This year he went further. For the same purpose of reparation he established at Annecy a Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament. He exhorted all Christians to enter into the spirit of this devout institution, to increase daily in devotion for our Lord in the tabernacle of the altar, to receive him and to visit him frequently in the churches—in fine, to make him every possible reparation for all those who failed to love him in the Blessed Sacrament, or who even heaped insults upon this precious gift of his love. From Annecy the Confraternity spread to Thonon and several other parishes of the diocese, in which it produced the most wonderful results.

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* C. A. de S., l. vi, p. 400.

During the whole of this period the Bishop's zeal was occupied in striving to settle the numerous and interminable difficulties of his episcopal work, the founding of parishes in the harassed country of Gex, the reformation of several monasteries, and the trouble of persuading the knights of SS Maurice and Lazarus to provide him with the funds due to the diocese: he was able, however, to find consolation in some of the events happening around him. Thus he wrote to the Bishop of Dol: "I find myself here in the midst of a thousand obstacles and overwhelmed with powerlessness in the execution of my work, yet none the less consoled by our Lord at several conversions of heretics, and noticeably among the citizens of Geneva, who, by an extraordinary movement, are leaving heresy one after another to enter holy Church, and nearly all of whom young people, as if it was a swarm seeking a better hive."*

The ministers of Geneva, finding themselves the objects of scorn and derision, because of their refusal the year before to engage in disputation with the Bishop of Geneva, spread abroad the rumour that they were quite willing to accept the discussion on the lines laid down by Baron de Lux, and that, if it did not take place, the blame was to be ascribed to the Bishop. Francis, taking them at their word, sent them the following note in his own hand:

"With regard to the rumours which are circulating on the subject of a religious disputation between myself, assisted by several Catholic preachers, and the ministers of Geneva, I have put my hand and my seal to this present document, in order to declare and attest that, whensoever the ministers are willing to come to an agreement as to the reasonable conditions for such a conference, I shall attend it with all despatch and sincerity, hoping in the goodness of God that his name will be glorified for the salvation and benefit of many souls, a grace I hereby beg of him.

"Given at Annecy, August 6, 1605.

"*Signed*, FRANCIS,
"*Bishop of Geneva.*"

The result of this action was the usual one. The ministers did not dare to give a direct refusal, but they had recourse to every kind of evasion and delay, and could never be brought to the fulfilment of their word. It is not unfair to suppose that they had far too great a respect for the Bishop's skill as a controversialist and his wonderful power of persuasion to give him an opportunity of evangelizing the citizens of Geneva under the protection of the municipality's safeguard.†

Two or three days after the issue of this note, the Bishop went to

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* E.N., Tom. XIII, Lettre CCXCIX, p. 73. † C. A. de S., l. vi, p. 405

Chablais in the company of M. d'Albigny, the Duke's Lieutenant-General, in order to put the final touch to the organization of the parishes in that country. Concerning this journey he wrote as follows to Baroness de Chantal: "I have just returned from the far end of my diocese, next door to the Swiss, where I have settled the establishment of thirty-three parishes, amongst which eleven years ago there were naught but ministers, and in which during that time I passed three years all alone in preaching the Catholic faith. God has vouchsafed to show me in this journey a sight full of utter consolation. For where in those days I found but a hundred Catholics I have now found but a hundred Huguenots."*

Scarcely had he returned to Annecy, when he found himself presiding over the Jubilee of the Great Pardons of Notre Dame de Liesse, which took place there every seven years.

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* E.N., Tom. XIII, Lettre CCCVI, p. 87.

CHAPTER XX*

(1605–1606)

Visitation of the diocese—Francis refuses a candidate for Orders—He converts a Genevan spy—Cures many demoniacs—Lenten station at Chambéry—The miracle of the crucifix—Conversions—The Senate attacks Francis—Return to Annecy and holding of synod—Rumours of war—The Saint's criticism of Pierre de Baume, his predecessor—His opinion of the Edict of Nantes—He converts a convict condemned to death—Resumes visitation—His endurance of hardships—He reconciles enemies—Conversion of a public sinner—The incident of the devoted pastor—Francis is edified by the death of a Christian—Pernette Boutey—Report of the diocese sent to Rome—The Pope consults Francis on the question "De auxiliis."

UP to this time the troubled state of the country, due to the recent wars, had rendered it impossible for Francis de Sales to make that general visitation of his diocese which is prescribed by the Council of Trent, and is so necessary for the maintenance of ecclesiastical discipline. Now, however, that calmer times had come, he set himself to perform this long-deferred duty. "Having been held up until now by a multitude of distressing business affairs," he wrote to Baroness de Chantal, "I am just about to set out on that visitation in the course of which I foresee, at every turn, crosses of all kinds. My flesh quivers at the thought of them, but my heart adores them all. Yes, I salute you, crosses great and small, spiritual or temporal, from within or from without: I salute you and kiss you, unworthy of the honour of your shadow."†

He set out on October 15, after having informed all the parish priests of his intended visit, and began his visitation with that part of his diocese which belonged to France. There he visited a parish every day, sometimes two or three, not confining himself to administering the Sacrament of Confirmation, but preaching and catechizing everywhere, hearing confessions, bringing back public sinners to their duty, reconciling enemies, and putting an end to lawsuits and quarrels. During the whole of this time he also saw that his secretaries drew up exact inventories of all ecclesiastical property and detailed accounts of the condition of each parish, after having examined for himself every church and presbytery, and even the smallest chapels.*

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* Hamon, l. iv, chap. v.

† E.N., Tom. XIII, Lettre CCCXVI, p. 113.

One very remarkable characteristic of the times seems to have been the multiplicity of vocations for the ecclesiastical state. During the months of October and November, at different places in this one part of his diocese, he conferred the tonsure on more than 150 candidates and the Minor Orders on at least thirty.† It does not follow, of course, that all these were genuine vocations or that all eventually attained to the priesthood. Here and there the Bishop himself discovered unsuitable aspirants. Thus on one occasion, having been asked by the parish priest of Montagne to confer the tonsure on a young man, the Bishop desired to examine for himself the evidences of this candidate's vocation. For a few moments he first silently considered the youth's personal appearance. Then he interrogated him, and conjured him in the name of God to say truly whether his own personal attraction inclined him towards the ecclesiastical state. The young man, after a short hesitation, frankly admitted that he had never had the slightest inclination or desire for it, but that his parents wished him to become a cleric, in order that he might obtain a certain rich benefice. "In that case," said the Bishop, "remain in the world and be a good Christian." After giving him some practical advice as to how to achieve this object, Francis dismissed him. Soon afterwards he was besieged by the youth's parents, who, in the greatest distress, begged him to reverse his decision. To these petitions was also added the pressure of several persons of considerable influence and position. But to all such representations the Bishop remained inflexible. "And why," he exclaimed, "do you, who claim to be my friends, want to force me to commit a grievous fault? I would much prefer that *you* should grumble against me than that Jesus Christ should be obliged to reproach me with having led to his altar unwilling victims, when his grace only asks for those who are willing. Leave me. Nothing will induce me to disobey the Apostle, who forbids us to impose hands imprudently."‡

The fatigues of the visitation having brought on a slight fever, the Bishop found himself obliged to stop at St Gras de Musinens in order to obtain a little rest. One day, while in his bedroom, he heard a young man in the next room joking about the stoutness of the Bishop of Geneva, and, with a play of words on the name of the place, remarking that the prelate ought to have found good health at St Gras and not sickness. Francis sent an invitation to this facetious person to come and see him. After the first exchanges of politeness on either side, the Bishop led the conversation on to the subject of his sickness, begged his visitor to feel his pulse, and asked for advice upon his health with such trust and civility that the young man, first of all astounded at the Bishop's clairvoyance and then won over by his kindness, was completely overwhelmed. For, as a matter of fact, he had studied medicine, though he had not informed any of the Bishop's entourage of that fact. "My lord," he exclaimed, "I see that you have the gift of reading hearts. I am the son of a physician of Geneva, and I have been sent hither by our ministers to spy upon your actions, and to find out what you have come to do in these villages." "I have come, my son," was the answer, "to seek out my sheep. You are one of those." And as he said this, the Bishop embraced him affectionately. The young man, moved to tears, fell on his knees before the Saint, and begged that the latter would dissipate the doubts he felt about religion, and instruct him in the truth. Instruction was an easy and speedy matter with one who was so well disposed. The Bishop took him away with him, and at the end of ten days the young physician made his public abjuration of heresy in the Church of Notre Dame de Brenod. Afterwards, as his conversion made it impossible for him to return to Geneva, the Bishop used his influence with friends in Paris to obtain for him an opening in that city.*

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* C. A. de S., l. vi, p. 415.

† *Journal* de Gonthier, pp. 43-46.

‡ *Année*, Oct. 14.

Amongst three of the villages which Francis visited on his rounds he found a most unhappy state of affairs. Throughout this district the most deplorable superstition had empire, and, as a consequence, the distressing phenomenon of demoniacal possession was very common. To the modern mind, accustomed to ascribe such things to insanity and epilepsy, there must be a difficulty in believing the accounts given by the Saint's biographers with regard to this portion of his life: but the true Christian knows, from the history of the Gospels and the long experience of the Church, that such dreadful things are only too possible. When the Bishop came to one district, then, he found many unfortunate beings, who showed all the signs of possession. They came around him, shrieking terribly, gnashing their teeth, throwing themselves into all sorts of horrible contortions, and crying out for deliverance from the evil which had hold of them. Francis, full of the prudence of the saints, and knowing the danger of mistaking the natural for the supernatural, proceeded with all due caution in dealing with these cases. Always he examined each case attentively, putting skilful questions to the sufferers, investigating their physical condition, and enquiring into their past history. When, at last, he became convinced that the phenomena were those of possession, he proceeded in due form to pronounce over the victims those special prayers which the Church uses for the purpose of exorcism. In nearly all these cases the demons obeyed the servant of God, left the bodies of the unfortunates whom they had been tormenting, and troubled them no more: "The number of people thus delivered came to more than eighty in these three parishes," writes his biographer.*

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* *Ibid.*, Oct. 20.

Having visited Michaille and Valromey, the Bishop went through Chautagne and finished his visitation with the parish of Versonnex-en-Genevois. He returned to Annecy on Saturday, November 26. "I arrived here Saturday evening," he wrote to Baroness de Chantal, "after having wandered about the country for six weeks, without stopping in one place more than half a day, preaching as a rule every day and sometimes twice a day. But how good God is to me! I have never felt stronger. All the crosses which I had foreseen have proved on closer acquaintance to be naught but laurels and palms: all that which had seemed like gall has been practically so much honey. . . . I have confirmed an uncountable number of people."†

During the month of December the Bishop was engaged, amongst other tasks, in putting the finishing touches to a little treatise of polemical theology, which was to serve as introduction to Antoine Favre's *Code.* Unfortunately, also, he was once more assailed by an illness, a catarrhal fever, which at one time threatened to be serious, but eventually left him at the end of a week.

On January 31, 1606, he set out for Chambéry. As early as the preceding March the Senate of Chambéry had invited the Saint to preach the next Lent "in the principal pulpit of Savoy," and had charged Senator Favre to support the invitation with his influence. Before undertaking this work of preaching, the Bishop, following his usual custom, made a retreat in the Jesuit house at Chambéry: here he edified everyone by his conduct, charming all by the simplicity and humility of his bearing to those around him and by his evident desire to cause as little trouble as possible to his hosts. His only complaint was that they made too much of him, and he refused gently yet firmly to be treated differently to anybody else. One day, when he came down to the sacristy to say Mass, he found a priest there already vested and about to go to the altar—apparently the only one in the church. As soon as this priest saw the Bishop enter the sacristy, he began to take off his vestments, inviting Francis to take his place. But Francis refused, and no amount of pressing on the part of the good father could induce him to say Mass out of his turn; he waited in prayer until the other had finished Mass, and then himself went to the altar.‡

After having thus prepared himself in solitude, Francis began his Lenten station in the Church of St Dominic, in the presence of the senators and a great crowd of the faithful. It was in most ways a repetition of the scenes of Paris and Dijon—the same power and eloquence on the part of the preacher, the same intense zeal for souls, and the same wonderful effect upon his hearers. The people, kindled to a burning enthusiasm by his words, proclaimed that each sermon was a miracle of grace, and repeated the verdict given once before in Paris that it was not so much the Bishop of Geneva who preached, but the Spirit of God speaking by his mouth. On a certain occasion God confirmed this saying by a miracle. During one of his sermons the church was plunged into semi-darkness by the passage of heavy storm-clouds: suddenly, as the Saint was ending his exhortation in a wonderful peroration of almost ecstatic fervour, rays of celestial light were seen to shine from the crucifix close above him and cast their radiance upon his face. The people cried out in wonder and admiration, and the Saint himself, noticing the miracle, was visibly overcome by this divine assault upon his humility. There can be no doubt about the reality of this miracle, the truth of which was confirmed on oath by reliable witnesses. Indeed, so evident was it, that on the next day the Bishop felt himself constrained to beg of those who had seen it that they would refrain from ever speaking of it to others.*

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* C. A. de S., l. vi, p. 414.

† E.N., Tom. XIII, Lettre CCCXX, p. 121.

‡ Dep. de Passier.

As we have mentioned above, numerous conversions resulted from these sermons. On one occasion two Flemish Protestants, attracted by the renown of the preacher, decided to go and hear him. He happened to be treating the doctrine of the invocation of the saints, and so efficiently did he demonstrate the truth of the Church's teaching on this head, that the two foreigners were completely shaken in the beliefs of their own religion. They came to him for further instruction and before long were received into the pale of the Church.†

Encouraged by the great success that crowned his labours, Francis multiplied his efforts, and did not confine his preaching to the Church of St Dominic, but also gave sermons, when he was free, in four other churches of the city.

In the meanwhile the Senate, which had invited him to come and preach at Chambéry, allowed itself to be persuaded by one of its influential members to persecute the Bishop in the strangest fashion. There was a lawsuit in progress at this time, which was apparently held up by the fact that certain people, unknown to the court, were refusing to come forward and give evidence. A nobleman of high rank, who was greatly interested in the matter, came to Francis and asked him to issue a monitory letter, obliging under pain of censure those who were silent to come forward and give evidence. The Bishop having examined the case, considered that it was not of sufficient importance to warrant the grave proceeding of employing ecclesiastical censures in its unravelling, and he begged his distinguished petitioner to desist from his request. The latter immediately flew into a great rage, spoke to Francis with the utmost haughtiness and insolence, and, finding that this was of no avail to the purpose, left the Bishop's presence with all manner of threats in his mouth. He then took his complaints to the Senate. The Senate, out of deference for the great man, proceeded to misuse justice by ordering the Bishop, under pain of the seizure of his temporalities, to publish the monitory letters that were demanded. To this decree Francis made no other reply but that he had a conscience to respect and a soul to save: and with this answer left the matter in the hands of Providence.* As a matter of fact, the seizure of his goods never took place, either because it never was anything but a foolish threat, or because the calmness and fortitude of the Bishop under such trying circumstances made the members of the Senate ashamed of their ill-judged action. When Francis learnt that the storm had blown over, he quietly remarked: "If they had taken my temporalities from me, they would have done me the greatest possible good. For they would have made me altogether spiritual. And in that case I should have become their judge, for is it not written: *The spiritual man judgeth all things; and he himself is judged of no man.*" Speaking of this incident in later years to Mgr. Camus, he remarked that God would have rendered him the seizure of his property a hundredfold. "Do you think," said he, "that the people of my diocese would have let me die of hunger? I am certain that I would have had more trouble refusing things than taking them. It is just the same with such property as with one's beard: the more you shave it, the thicker it becomes. Or like the wild camomile, which, the more you trample it under foot, the more it grows and flourishes."†

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* C. A. de S., l. vi, p. 417. Hamon quotes De Maupas, p. 253: also dep. of Bouvard, Favre, and Emeri

† *Ibid.*, p. 418.

In justice to the members of the Senate, it should be said that there were a certain number who never agreed to this persecution, and who called upon the Bishop to assure him of their sentiments; others who had had a share in it repented of their action and apologized; while, later on, the Senate as a whole protested its profound regret for what had happened. Ultimately the only result was to increase the Bishop's influence in his spiritual work.

In addition to the ordinary work of the Lenten station, the Bishop held two ordinations, with, of course, the permission of the Bishop of Grenoble, who was the Ordinary of the diocese. One of these was in the church of St Antony, where the Canons Regular of that title conducted a house for the education of church students. Not content with ordaining the candidates, the Bishop devoted considerable time to preparing them and hearing their confessions. President Favre, his great friend, alarmed at seeing him undertake so much extra work, expostulated with him, and suggested that he might have left this preparatory labour to others. The Bishop, alluding playfully to the ceremony of the tonsure, answered: " My dear brother, it seemed to me that it was my business to wash these poor sheep, since I am the one who is about to shear them."* In addition to these ordinations, he also consecrated the Holy Oils on Maundy Thursday.†

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* *Ibid.*, p. 417.

† *Esprit*, Part I, Sects. 26 and 27.

On his return to Annecy, he held the annual diocesan synod, in which, on this occasion, he decreed the observance throughout his territory of the feast of St Peter in Chains and that of the Dedication.

Just at this time, for some reason or other, rumours of war were again spreading through the country. It was whispered about that the Genevans, irritated by the Duke's constant protection of the Catholic religion in the neighbourhood of their city, were about to invade his states, lay siege to Annecy itself, and convert it into a fortified base, whence they could pursue further military operations and could overrun the country with their own religion. On hearing these rumours, a certain number of the Bishop's friends, alarmed at the risk he would run, should these things be true, tried to persuade him to retire from Annecy for a time to a place of greater safety. " Nay," answered Francis, " I think you are trembling with fear when there is no occasion for such: for God will not suffer that the *Gentiles should come into his inheritance, defile his holy temple and make Jerusalem as a place to keep fruit.* Nevertheless, if you want to know in any case what I would do, I certainly think I have still enough courage left not to fly when I see the wolf coming, and I would not desert my sheep. But rather—and why not?—I would gird my sword to my thigh, I would put on my helmet, and would show myself a faithful captain of my people."‡ On this point he spoke regretfully of the timid conduct of Pierre de Baume, who was Bishop of Geneva at the time of the religious and political crisis of the Reformation in Switzerland, and who fled from his episcopal see in the time of trouble. " Truly," went on Francis, " he was a man of excellent disposition and a sincere Catholic, but his courage was of the sort that only flourishes in time of prosperity, and fails when it should hold fast. As soon as he saw that his Genevans were being carried away by various strange doctrines, he should have remained in the city and stood firm, instead of withdrawing and abandoning it. He ought to have gone up on to the walls of Jerusalem, and never ceased to cry out day and night, until she was converted to the Lord her God. Do you think Geneva would have lost the faith if she had seen her pastor and prince armed, boldly keeping his gate and his place? No, indeed! And believe me, if God were to permit us to be again afflicted with a similar persecution, I would by word and action encourage my people in combat and defence, and would not refuse to undergo all the troubles and labours of war for that purpose: for the combats of God are a reward in themselves, and it is of the essence of my duty to lay down my life for my sheep. But, as I have told you, God will have mercy on his people, provided we place a firm hope in him, and will not surrender to the fangs of wild beasts the souls of them that confess to his Holy Name."*

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* *Année*, Fev. 18.

† *Journal* de Gonthier, p. 49.

‡ C. A. de S., l. vi, p. 419.

Another report, which was going the rounds at this time, was to the effect that the Duke of Savoy, in order to conciliate the Calvinists, was about to grant liberty of exercise to the Protestant religion throughout his states, on the same principles used by Henry IV in France in promulgating the Edict of Nantes. Francis knew that there was very little likelihood that Charles Emmanuel would issue such a decree. If, however, such a thing were contemplated, the Bishop would oppose it with all the means at his disposal, even at the risk of his life. "Alas!" he added, "*what concord hath Christ with Belial—what fellowship hath light with darkness?* And whence comes so much misery and evil to France except from this miserable toleration of liberty, worse than the harshest slavery? Let the statesmen have as many reasons for it as they like, certain it is that I can see not the slightest grounds for it here. And since the King and his Catholic adherents are the stronger, if I were his counsellor, I would strive to persuade him to forbid and drive out any religion opposed to the Catholic faith, without paying any attention to all the empty reasons which are put forward to the contrary. Woe to princes, and woe to France, because of this liberty!"†

Though Francis did not believe in these rumours, he nevertheless left nothing to chance, but worked with renewed ardour to strengthen his people in their faith and to advance them in the practice of virtue and good works. In the pulpit and the confessional, in public and private, he everywhere exhorted the faithful to redouble their efforts to make themselves better and more pleasing to God. He visited assiduously the sick, the poor and the imprisoned. He went down into the gloomiest dungeon-cells to give what consolation he could to those who were interred therein for crime, and by means of the Sacrament of Penance to bring them to repentance.

There was at this time in the prison a foreigner who had been convicted of coining false money, and who, in accordance with the severe laws then in usage, had been condemned to death. This unhappy man surrendered to despair, gave himself up to all kinds of cursing and blasphemy, refused to forgive those who were responsible for his conviction, and rejected the advances of all who strove to induce him to make his peace with God. In spite of these failures,

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* *Ibid.*, p. 419.

† C. A. de S., l. vi, p. 240. Hamon quotes Charles Auguste, but his version is very different from the original.

Francis determined to make one more effort to soften the criminal's hardness. Such was his tact and charity that in a short time he had brought the prisoner to a better frame of mind, and had persuaded him to make his confession and prepare to undergo his bitter penalty in a spirit of Christian resignation. It was the custom that a condemned man should suffer his punishment at the place ot his crime, and in this case the execution was to be carried out at a spot ten leagues away from Annecy. The Bishop accompanied his penitent for the first stage of the final journey, striving to comfort him in every possible way, and embracing him affectionately when the moment of parting came to hand. When Francis had returned to his home, one of the members of his household asked him why he had taken such a sympathetic interest in a stranger, utterly unknown to him before. "It is true that he was a stranger," answered the Bishop, "and unknown to me. But we are all brothers in God, who is our common Father. What need is there of more than that to arouse our interest?"*

On June 17, 1606, Francis resumed his episcopal visitation. He began with Alby, the neighbourhood of Albens and of Rumilly, and the valley of Bauges: passing thence to Faverges, he went up to Megève along the valley of the Arly. From Megève he went down to Sallanches, where he presided at the patronal feast of St James the Greater, celebrated High Mass, and carried the Blessed Sacrament in procession. It was at Sallanches that he had the satisfaction of assisting at the conversion of a nobleman, who had led a very disorderly life, and of devoting a long time to the hearing of his confession, in spite of the importunity of several people, who were vexed at being delayed in their visit to the confessional. "It is better," he said, "that the ninety-nine faithful sheep should suffer a little, while waiting for their shepherd, than that he should fail to bring back upon his shoulders the one he went out into the desert to seek."

From Sallanches the Bishop passed on to the valley of Chamounix, the magnificent scenery of which is commanded by the snow-clad peaks of the Mont Blanc chain. Having but little time at his disposal, Francis travelled over this difficult country with as much speed as possible, visiting a parish every day and sometimes more than one. The ruggedness of the country made it necessary that a great part of the journey should be made on foot, and the Saint and his companions had often to endure the greatest hardships. After a time the roughness of the mountain paths caused such injury to his feet that he could scarcely stand: nevertheless, he struggled bravely on, never complaining, but showing sympathy rather for the sufferings of his little suite than for his own. Each morning he was the first to rise and begin the day's work, and never did he allow either hardship or work to interfere with those daily devotions which he held to be so necessary to himself in the performance of his duties. At length, however, he was forced to give up journeying on foot, and had to resign himself to the use of a horse. Even so his travels were full of privation. One of his legs had become so inflamed that he was obliged to sit his horse sideways, resting his injured limb on the bow of the saddle, and was thus only able to advance at a very slow pace. One day, when his companions, who were also mounted, had hastened forwards, in order not to be caught by the approaching darkness, they inadvertently left their master a considerable distance in the rear. He, in his usual uncomplaining manner, took no notice of this temporary desertion and pursued his way quietly, at whatever pace he could manage. Eventually the others perceived that they had been advancing too fast and returned: Georges Rolland, however, could not refrain from making use of the privilege of an old servant, and ventured to complain of the Bishop's slowness. But even in his weariness the Bishop's patience was proof against this provocation. "My dear M. Rolland, my friend," he answered gently, "we get along as best we can."*

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* C. A. de S., l. vi, p. 421.

The Bishop's labours were not confined to the mere official work of visitation: he preached, catechized, heard confessions, held ordinations, visited the poor, and distributed alms. He would speak in patois to those who understood that language better than the purer tongue of the day, and he would recommend the parish priests to give their catechetical instructions just as he had done, bringing to them the greatest simplicity and homeliness consonant with the subjects. That he was able to maintain his health in the midst of so much labour and travel was a marvel. As he wrote to Baroness de Chantal: "It is a miracle. Every evening, when I go to bed, I can stir neither my body nor my mind, so entirely tired out do I feel. And next morning I am brighter than ever."†

When he came to the parish of Samoëns, he found it in a terrible state of discord: its inhabitants, divided by partisan spirit, were full of enmity, one towards another. The Saint arrived amongst them during the Octave of the Assumption, and he took advantage of the lessons of the feast to instil into the villagers a better spirit. After relating to them the traditional story of our Lady's death, he cried out: "O my dear people, Mary dies of love: and we, we live in hate. She, on her part, rises up to heaven: we, on ours, are going down to hell." At this thought of the eternal loss of his beloved flock, he burst into tears, and, unable to continue his sermon, was forced to come down from the pulpit. But his sorrow on their behalf, and the terrible words uttered by one who was of his nature so gentle and so confident in God's mercy, had their effect. The people, moved to repentance, flocked around his confessional, and laying aside their enmities, became reconciled to God by their reconciliation with each other.

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* Hamon quotes *Recueil de la Mère Greffier.*

† E.N., Tom. XIII, Lettre CCCLXV, p. 221.

The next day the Bishop, having gone up into the pulpit, made the sign of the cross as usual, bowed towards the tabernacle, and then pronounced aloud these two words only: "*Jesus! Mary!*" For a short time he remained motionless, silent, his hands clasped together within his biretta, which he held close to his breast. It seemed as though he were about to enter into an ecstasy. But suddenly, with a repetition of the words—*Jesus! Mary!*—he began his sermon, and, surrendering himself evidently to a sublime inspiration, he spoke to the people in the most moving terms of these two sacred names, showing the glory of Mary in Jesus, and the love of Jesus in Mary. The impression upon the audience was profound, and finally won over to the doctrine of peace those few who were still hesitating in their surrender. That afternoon he formed a little court for the settlement of difficulties, and spent several hours in hearing the accusations, counter-charges, and defences of the various parties in the dispute which had so sadly divided the people of the district. It need scarcely be said that with his wonderful powers of conciliation and fair-mindedness he was able to put an end to the current disputes, and left Samoëns in the enjoyment of a new and lasting peace.*

From Samoëns, passing down the valley of the Giffre, the Saint went to Viuz in the vale of Boège. When he arrived at the village of Villard, he was told that there was in the district a man who, by leading an openly evil life, was giving great scandal to the people. The Bishop immediately sought him out, and, having found him, strove by gentleness and persuasion to alter the tenor of his life. The only return which the man made to the Saint's overtures was to speak to him in terms of scorn and insult. Eventually Francis felt obliged to pass to other and more severe methods, and threatened the sinner with the penalty of excommunication. "Very well," answered the latter, "if you excommunicate me, I will pass over to Protestantism: and that I swear to, here and now." To this the Bishop made no answer, but withdrew in silence and sorrow. This, however, was not the end of the matter. For the man, moved, perhaps, against his will or urged by curiosity, went to the church when the Saint was about to preach. It was the feast of St John the Baptist, who was the patron of the parish, and the Bishop seized the opportunity to speak in strong and eloquent terms against those vices in Herod which had brought about the martyrdom of the Precursor. His words went straight home to the heart of the man whose own sins were thus opportunely branded, and at the end of the sermon he came forward with tears in his eyes, and at the foot of the pulpit begged the Bishop to hear his confession. The latter at once acceded, realizing that the confession made thus in the presence, as it were, of all the people, would of itself be a corrective to the scandal already given. When the penitent came out of the confessional, he stood before the people, and with every sign of repentance and humility begged their pardon for the harm which his sins of the past might have occasioned. The people, scarcely able to believe the evidence of their senses, were deeply moved by this voluntary act of self-humiliation, whilst the Bishop, embracing the new convert, exclaimed before them all: " Ah, my children, let us rejoice. You see before you a brother who, in accordance with the words of Jesus Christ, tears out an eye and cuts off a hand, in order to enter the Kingdom of heaven. He is a son of the Gospel, a soul of predestination." Not content with thus starting the convert on his new life, the Bishop kept him in his own company for several days, in order to give him advice and to help him break away from the trammels of the past.*

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* *Année*, Août 18 and 19.

During all this time, when he was saving the souls of others, his thoughts were ever going back upon his own soul, and he was drawing lessons for his own advancement from the beauties of the wild country around him and from the simple yet heroic qualities of the people amongst whom he was labouring. He saw God everywhere. " I have found him," he wrote later to Mme. de Chantal, " full of gentleness and sweetness even amongst our high and severe mountains, where many simple souls loved and adored him in all truth and sincerity, and where the roebuck and the chamois wandered in all directions amongst the terrible snows, in order to announce his praise. It is true that, for want of devotion, I only understood a few words of their language, but it seemed to me indeed that they uttered most beautiful things: your St Augustine would have understood them well, had he beheld them.

" But, my dear daughter, let me tell you of one incident—a true story—which makes me shiver with fear. About a week before we arrived in the glacier country, a poor herdsman was wandering hither and thither over the ice-fields in search of a cow that had strayed. Not taking sufficient care of his steps, he fell down a crevasse, a chasm about a hundred and fifty feet deep. No one would have known what had become of him, were it not that his hat, falling from his head at the moment of his accident, had been left on the edge of the gulf, and so marked the place where he had perished. One of his neighbours had himself lowered by means of a rope, in order to find him, and discovered him not only dead but covered with ice; and, in this state, he put his arms around him and shouted for the others to pull him up, otherwise he himself would soon have died of the cold. They pulled him up, therefore, holding in his arms the body of his friend, to which he afterwards gave Christian burial. What a spur for me, my dear daughter! This pastor who makes his way through such dangerous country for one only animal: this horrible fall, caused by the ardour of his quest, his attention fixed rather upon the object of his search and the track of its wandering than upon his own steps and the place over which he is passing: the charity of the neighbour, who goes down into the abyss to draw his friend from its depths! This country of ice, must it not, then, freeze with terror or should it not rather burn with love?"*

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* *Année*, Août 29.

In a former letter he had described the devotion with which the people of the mountains had received him. "O my dear daughter," he wrote, "what good people I have found in this huge country of high mountains! What honour, what veneration, what a welcome for their Bishop! The day before yesterday (September 30) I arrived at a little town after the fall of night, but the inhabitants had devised such a feast of illumination that all was light as day. Ah! what a very much worthier Bishop they deserve to have!"†

On arriving at one of the places of his visitation, Francis was informed that an old man, who was far advanced in a serious malady, desired to receive the Bishop's blessing before death. The Saint hastened at once to the invalid's bedside, and after giving him the consolations of religion, was conversing with him for a short time. The old man asked the Bishop very insistently two or three times whether he was about to die, and Francis, thinking that he was worried by the fear of death, answered him in an optimistic manner, but recommending him earnestly to place himself in the hands of God's Providence. "O my lord," exclaimed the invalid, "it is not for fear of death that I am asking you this: but for fear that I shall not die. I find it difficult to resign myself to getting better." The Bishop, astonished at this unexpected answer, enquired if he were suffering much, or if he had some great financial or family trouble, that he was so anxious to leave the world. The other reassured Francis on these points: he was not in great pain, had always been more than comfortably blessed with the world's goods, and had been served by the best of families. "No, my lord," he answered, "I have had here on earth every happiness that could be desired. But in the sermons I have listened to, I have heard the other life and the joys of paradise so wonderfully described that this world seems to be but a prison." Then the old man, going back to the sermons he had mentioned and to the thoughts of his own humble meditations, spoke so beautifully of the joys of heaven, so eloquently of the vanity of the world, that the Bishop, marvelling at the knowledge which God had bestowed upon this homely and uneducated peasant, was moved to tears. Finally the sick man, under the Saint's suggestion, made acts of complete resignation to God, either for death or for life, and in a short time passed peacefully into that other world for which he had sighed so long.*

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* E.N., Tom. XIII, Lettre CCCLXVI, p. 223.

† *Ibid.*, Lettre CCCLXV, p. 221.

Another example of virtue which greatly rejoiced the Saint's heart was that of a well-to-do village woman, Pernette Boutey, of Amancy, near La Roche. After having proved herself a model of piety in her earlier years, she had shown herself to be also a model of charity and gentleness, of industry and devotion in the married state. She attended carefully to her household duties, displayed a constant and affectionate patience with an irritable husband, and treated her servants with a motherly interest, doing all she could for their welfare, both as regards their physical comfort and their spiritual state. Outside her home she spent much of her spare time in visiting the sick, helping the poor, and comforting those who were in sorrow. To these external qualities were added the inner gifts of humility, mortification, and the love of God, and she maintained these virtues by a regular frequentation of the sacraments and an extraordinarily wise system of spiritual exercises, perfectly adapted to her state. The result of all this was that she lived in a perpetual unity with God such as is peculiar to the saints alone, and when the end of her life was come and the Holy Spirit revealed to her that he was about to call her to himself, she looked forward to the moment of death as the one thing to be desired and longed for.†

After the Bishop had visited the valley of Boège, he went through the eastern part of Chablais, then the lower valley of the Arve and Les Bornes, stopping finally at Contamine-sous-Marlioz. He had visited 185 parishes. We have given but the barest sketch of his labours. As we have already said, he did not confine himself to the merely official work of visitation. He held a number of ordinations, for the most part cases of tonsure and the minor orders. At Flumet he consecrated a church: and we are also told that here he distributed to those present, as a protection against lightning, pieces of metal from a bell formerly blessed by St Theodulus.‡ At Ville-en-Salaz, after a sermon on our Lady, he distributed rosaries amongst the people, and when it was evident that he had not enough for all present, found them miraculously multiplying in his hands.§ One of the consolations of his visitation was the excellence of many of the clergy. Thus, at one place, he is reported to have said: "Blessed be God who gives us such good parish priests, so that I have not very much to do here."*

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* *Esprit*, Part. iii, Sect. 46.

† C. A. de S., l. vi, p. 425. E.N., Tom. XIII, Lettre CCCLVIII, p. 200: also *ibid.*, p. 403.

‡ Gonthier, p. 53.

§ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

The next task which awaited the Saint was the compilation of a report of his diocese, for the information of the Holy See, for he was bound by the oath which he had taken on the day of consecration to render an account of his administration every five years, either by going to Rome himself, or by sending thither a deputy. This particular report has been preserved for us by Charles Auguste de Sales. We give it here almost in full.

"It is now seventy-one years since the Bishop of Geneva, with all his clergy, was driven from his city and with great injustice deprived of all his personal property and of the greater part of his real estate. That is the reason why he now resides in the town of Annecy, in the duchy of Genevois, awaiting the day of reconquest.

"The episcopal revenue is now very small, being brought up with the greatest difficulty to the sum of 1,000 golden crowns: so that, after subtracting the wages of the episcopal officials, there is not enough left to the Bishop for the proper support of himself and his household. But he who has never been educated to superabundance, knows how to endure poverty.

"The Bishop now living, Francis de Sales, is the sixth of those who have ruled from without the city of Geneva—a native of the diocese and chosen from the chapter of the Cathedral Church, of which he was provost for the space of ten years. He resides in his diocese. It is now four years since he was appointed and consecrated bishop, and having been hindered by the troubles of time and by war from visiting his diocese during the first two years, he has since visited in person 260 parishes, breaking the bread of God's word to the people according to the best of his ability, and conferring the sacrament of Confirmation upon the faithful. It is his intention, with the aid of God, to visit the rest of his diocese in the following year.

"He had as predecessor Claude de Granier, a prelate worthy of eternal memory, who every year assembled his synod according to ecclesiastical decree, bestowed the benefices of the parish churches upon the most worthy by means of competitive examinations, according to the ruling of the holy Council of Trent, held his ordinations at the four Embertides, and took the greatest care that the Divine Offices were everywhere celebrated according to the Roman use. His successor, though unworthy, strives to the best of his ability to follow in the same path.

"In the cathedral chapter of Geneva, which is dedicated to the name and miracle of St Peter freed from his chains, there are thirty canons, including the Provost, the Precentor, and the Sacristan, all of whom receive an equal prebend, so that the Provost, having been despoiled by the heretics, receives no more than the others. There are six choir boys with their master, eight assistants who are engaged in the singing and music, and four others whose duties are to bear the processional cross, ring the bells, carry out the ceremonies, and look after the sacred vestments. After paying all the charges and expenses necessary to the carrying out of their functions, the annual sum left to each canon does not amount to forty golden crowns—a stipend, indeed, insufficient to feed the least of men. Yet it is a marvel with what devotion and magnificence, in spite of this poverty, the Divine Offices are carried out in this church: so that they have not during all their exile hung up their instruments upon the willows, but sing a hymn of the songs of Sion and the song of the Lord in a strange land.* For these offices are celebrated in the church of the Franciscan Observants in the town of Annecy. All the canons are either gentle by birth or graded as doctors, according to their ancient statutes, confirmed by the Holy Apostolic See: amongst them there are at present ten powerful preachers of the word of God."

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* *Ibid.*, p. 53.

The report then relates that there were in the diocese four collegiate churches, the membership of which came to a total of fifty canons and sixteen beneficed clergy, who, although reduced to great poverty, carried out their duty of chanting the Divine Office day by day. There were also six abbeys of monks, five conventual priories, five Carthusian houses, five houses of friars, thirty-five rural priories, twelve of which were united to churches, and finally five convents for women.

" The parish churches," says the report, " total 590, in 450 of which the sacraments are administered and the people instructed in the Catholic religion.

" All the people of these 400 parishes are truly Catholic and faithful observers of the ancient piety, even though in seventy of these the heresy of Calvin was in full vigour ten years ago. For by the authority of His Most Serene Highness the Duke, and through the preaching of several ecclesiastics, partly seculars and partly regulars of different Orders, particularly the Society of Jesus and the Capuchins, they were converted to the Pastor of their souls; and those who walked in the darkness of error have seen a great light, and, withdrawn from the gloomy shadow of death, walk now as children of light.

" There are in the diocese fifteen schools in which young people are instructed in grammar and literature, but especially in Christian doctrine according to the Catechism. In ten of the towns the preaching of the Lenten Station takes place every year."

The Bishop then proceeds to deal with several difficulties under which the diocese was at that time labouring.

" There is not," he says, " throughout the whole of Christendom a diocese more in need of a seminary for clerical students than that of Geneva. Nevertheless, up to the present, all efforts to effect this foundation have failed utterly: for the episcopal revenues are too slender to afford any economies for this purpose; the incomes of the cathedral chapter are also very small and insufficient for the maintenance of the canons; it is just the same with the other secular collegiate churches. From the abbeys and priories, however rich they may be, nothing can be obtained, because those who possess them hold fast thereto, and, indeed, are often severely bled by the various annuities imposed upon them. Nevertheless, if the Apostolic See, with its sovereign authority, would allot a few rural priories towards the foundation of this seminary, the matter might really be brought to a successful issue. It is, of a certainty, absolutely necessary that it should be done in this manner or by a common contribution from the clergy."

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* Allusion to Ps. CXXXVI.

He then deals with the theologian and the penitentiary of the chapter. These, on account of the insufficiency of their prebends, were obliged to find other work in addition, and so were not able to fulfil their duties in the most perfect manner. The Saint suggests that to these two officials might be allotted two of those prebends which by an abuse of the times were drawn from the neighbouring monasteries by laymen.

The third great difficulty was the reformation of certain religious houses. "It is an amazing thing," the Bishop reports, "how relaxed the discipline of all the regulars has become in all the abbeys and priories of this diocese, except in the case of the Carthusians and the Friars. Their *silver is turned into dross*, their *wine is mingled with water*, nay, is even changed into poison, since they give cause for blasphemy to the enemies of the Lord, who say from day to day, *Where is their God?* This evil might be remedied by the introduction of better religious from other Orders; or by visiting these houses every year and correcting them; or finally, perhaps, by putting in their places canons regular. This last would be very suitable in several instances, although in some it would seem perhaps to be somewhat harsh, for in this diocese canons regular differ in very little from seculars. At any rate, there is not amongst these religious any observance of regular discipline, nor any written constitutions, nor any express pronunciation of vows. Why, then, should they not be changed into seculars, who would be much more useful to the Christian commonwealth? All the more so that there are in Savoy a great number of gentlemen, destitute of sufficient incomes for their condition, whose children have embraced the ecclesiastical state, and these latter might be very suitably provided for in this manner. And if one did the same thing with some of the monks, it would be, in my judgement, a very good thing.

"As to the matter of visitation, it would not be advisable that this should be carried out by the Superiors of those Orders; for the abbots and monks of Cluny, Savigny, and Saint Ruf do not even know what reformation means, and since their own salt is corrupted, how could they be able to cure and preserve their inferiors?

"But to tell the truth, the first remedy is very easy; the third very useful and tending very greatly to the glory of God with regard to this province; and the second very difficult and very uncertain, for what is done by force is seldom done well."

The Bishop's fourth point treated the question of the reformation of the religious houses of nuns. "With regard to the nuns," he writes, "the two convents of St Clare are very well conducted. The gates of those of Cîteaux are open to anyone: to the nuns, if they wish to go out; to men, if they wish to go in. I do not see that they can be reformed except by bringing them back to the towns and giving them other Superiors, who are like to have more care of their souls and consciences. Both the nuns of Cîteaux and St Clare are deprived of the care of an extraordinary confessor . . . they are constrained to make their confessions always to the one priest and are never free to ask the assistance of another, with what danger to their souls, God knows—not I. They never present their postulants to the Bishop or the Vicar, in order that these may test the desire of the candidates to embrace the vows of religion."

In the fifth place, the Bishop expressed his desire to increase the number of parish churches, and he gives some interesting pictures of his charge. "This diocese of Geneva," he says, "is placed in the midst of very lofty mountains, near the summit of which there are, more frequently than not, villages of considerable population. For the consolation of these people in matters spiritual, our predecessors built churches to which the priests of the lower valleys had to go on all feast-days, in order to celebrate the holy Sacrifice of the Mass." There were not enough inhabitants to make more than this a possibility. "But now that God has multiplied these people and that by their work and industry the deserts are transformed into fields and meadows, it is to be desired that rectors of their souls should be established: the tithes which they would receive every year would be capable of giving them the necessary support." The Bishop then goes on to state, however, that these tithes had been granted in nearly every case to the monasteries of the district, which formerly was no ill, since the monasteries were full of spiritual life, and the monks only left their houses in order to evangelize the people. "But now," continues the Saint, "when one can remark nothing in their successors but the habit they wear, the poor inhabitants of the mountains cry out like sheep deprived of their pasture. . . . And certainly it seems that they have reason to complain. . . .

"It is true indeed that it is the bishops' duty to set these things right, but it can be done by them only with the greatest difficulty. For, first of all, the monks would institute proceedings on behalf of the owner before the lay tribunals, and if that were to fail, they would have recourse to various injunctions and appeals. . . . Now may it please God, and please God speedily, that the Holy Apostolic See may send a wise and just Visitor, in order that he may distribute to each church, as to each family, the due and needful measure of corn!"

Finally, the Bishop dealt with the subject of the heretics who occupied part of his territory. "Besides the 450 parishes," he writes, "which we have mentioned as being inhabited by good Catholics, there remain 150 others which are partly in the tyrannous power of the Bernese, and partly under the rule of the most Christian king. As to those which are occupied by the Bernese, there is no hope until the town of Berne be brought to subjection. With regard to the others possessed by the most Christian king, it is true that His Majesty continually bids me to keep up my hopes, and assuredly for the last four years I have gone on hoping in obedience to his command: but now my eyes fail somewhat in his word, saying, *When will he console me?* About the whole of this affair Cardinal Bufalo is very well informed. . . . I will say nothing of Geneva: for it is to the devils and the heretics what Rome is to the angels and the Catholics. It should be the care of all those who profess the orthodox Roman faith and religion, but principally of the Pope and of all princes, that this Babylon should be overthrown or converted; but rather would I that she be converted and live, and, in so doing, give praise to God who lives for ever and ever."*

The Bishop chose his brother, Jean François de Sales, who was a canon of the diocese, to bear this report to Rome and to be his deputy in the fulfilment of his visit *ad limina.* Along with the report he also gave his brother a letter for the Holy Father, setting forth the various reasons which prevented him from journeying to Rome himself—of which reasons the principal were the delicacy of his health, the difficulties of the journey, and the pressing needs of his diocese. He also provided his brother with two letters of recommendation to Cardinals Baronius and Pamphili.

Canon de Sales received a most flattering welcome in Rome. As brother and envoy of the learned and saintly Bishop of Geneva, he was everywhere much sought after and made the recipient of all kinds of attention and hospitality. The report on the diocese was read with the greatest interest. Cardinal Pamphili, who was commissioned to answer it, had naught but praise as his commentary, congratulated the Bishop on all the good that had been done, and promised the support of his influence when the various petitions were placed before the Holy Father. Canon de Sales obtained all that was asked for, and, when he left Rome, bore with him letters from several of the Cardinals, testifying to the veneration in which they held the saintly Bishop of Geneva.

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* C. A. de S., l. vi, p. 434 *et seq.*

It is probable that on the occasion of this visit Jean François de Sales had carried with him to Rome the statement of his brother's opinion on the famous question *De Auxiliis* or of predestination. For a long time theologians had been disputing about the reconciliation of divine grace with human liberty. The Dominicans, who maintained that grace, efficacious by its nature, infallibly moved the human will, were vigorously assailed by the Jesuits, who urged that this opinion was an attack upon the doctrine of free will; the Jesuits, who maintained that grace was only efficacious through the co-operation of man, were in their turn combated by the Dominicans, as holding an opinion derogatory to the rights of God's omnipotence and the supreme empire of his grace. The discussion became so heated as to have lost all semblance of academic dignity, and the word *heretic* was bandied from side to side by the learned but over-zealous disputants. The Holy See, wearied by these dissensions and anxious to put an end to the matter, called before its tribunal the best-known controversialists of the two parties, and, from September 14, 1605, to the following March 1, there occurred one of the intensest dialectic combats that have ever taken place even in the annals of theology. Unfortunately, when this long contest came to a conclusion, no one could honestly say that any real light had been thrown upon the question, and to neither of the contesting parties could the palm of victory be decreed. In the meanwhile, Anastasius Germonio, afterwards Bishop of Tarentaise, wrote to Francis about the matter, and the latter, in reply, told him in a short and concise form his opinion thereon. This letter was communicated to the Pope. The Holy Father considered it to be so excellent, so decisive and so satisfactory in its conclusions, that he sent word to the Bishop of Geneva, asking for a further and more developed expression of opinion. Francis, out of obedience, sent an exposition of his teaching, the same that he worked out later in his *Treatise of the Love of God*, and much the same, be it said, as what the Jesuits had maintained on their side of the controversy. As a practical conclusion he added that the dispute was a very dangerous one, since the slightest exaggeration or misunderstanding of either point of view was likely to lead to heresy; that he had studied the matter very deeply and had found therein in many places the most harassing difficulties; that the time did not seem ripe for a decision upon such controverted points, which had as defenders on either side the authority of the greatest theological intellects; that the zeal and genius of theologians would be much better employed in curing the evils which afflicted the Church than in prolonging disputes which were of no utility to religion and might possibly be very harmful; and that, therefore, it was his own prayer that the Dominicans and Jesuits should substitute for these disputes a mutual and friendly agreement, an alliance of zeal, in order that they might work together in unity to the greatest benefit of the Christian republic. He wrote in the same sense to the papal Nuncio in Savoy. Paul V, adopting these views of moderation and broad-mindedness, abstained from pronouncing a decision on the disputed question. He contented himself with forbidding the controversialists to brand with theological censure the opinions of their opponents: they were not to call each other heretics. In the sequel Francis might be considered fortunate in his role of peacemaker: for the two parties did not end their own quarrel in order to attack him, but each did him equal honour for his share in bringing about a state of peace. Several of the most distinguished Jesuits wrote him letters full of gratitude, friendship, and respect, whilst the General of the Dominicans sent to him from Rome letters of affiliation to his Order and of participation in the merits of all the good works effected thereby. This was a favour which appealed greatly to the heart of the Saint, and similar to one which he had already obtained for himself from the Carthusians.*

* C. A. de S., l. vii, p. 10 of vol. ii.

CHAPTER XXI*

1607

Foundation of the Florimontane Academy at Annecy—Francis as arbiter of disputes—He describes an incident of his catechisms—Lenten Station at Annecy—Rebuke in church of a nobleman—Disapproval of a querulous preacher—Jubilee at Thonon and pilgrimage to St Claude—Reformation of the Abbey of Abondance—Death of Anne d'Este: funeral and panegyric—Grant of the priory of Thonon to the Holy House and final settlement with the Knights—The frogs of Viuz—Phenomenal storm at Sales—Further visitations—Francis blesses a chapel in honour of B. Peter Faber—He exorcizes a presbytery—Death of Jeanne de Sales and correspondence with Mme. de Chantal thereon

DURING the winter of the year 1607 the Bishop of Geneva devoted himself to a work which he had been planning for some time. This was the creation at Annecy of an Academy, devoted to the cultivation of literature, theology, law, mathematics, and natural science. The proceedings of this Academy were to be of a twofold nature: on the one hand, its members were to deliver courses of lectures for the benefit of such young men as were ambitious to complete their ordinary education by pursuing a higher branch of studies; and, on the other hand, these members were to meet together for the purpose of mutual aid and encouragement by means of the reading of more advanced papers, and of discussion amongst themselves of those subjects in which they took particular interest. For Francis de Sales perceived that in Annecy, as elsewhere, there was a large class of well-to-do young people, who, for want of opportunity, encouragement, and guidance in the matter of study, were liable to drift into a dangerously idle life, or who, if they set to work seriously of their own nature and impulse, were likely to be led towards a false learning or to make little progress in the good, for want of wise direction and help. Therefore, both for the instruction of the young and the further perfection of the mature, he resolved to found an Academy.

It was only natural that, when seeking help for the realization of his plan, he should turn to his lifelong friend, President Antoine Favre, who, in addition to his wide and deep knowledge of law, was well versed in literature, and was one of the most cultured men of the times. In concert with this eminent man, the Bishop developed his plans for his Academy, and drew up its constitutions. It was to be called the "Florimontane Academy," in order to indicate that it was destined to gather the fairest flowers of literature and science that the mountains of Savoy would produce. Its emblem was an orange-tree in blossom, with the device *Flores fructusque perennes.* Its object was to be the greatest glory of God, the service of the sovereign, and the well-being of the commonwealth. Admission was only to be granted to good Catholics, who could be recommended on the score of their learning in any matter within the scope of the Academy, or who had distinguished themselves by the publication of a notable work, by the compilation of some manuscript, by a scientific discovery, or by the invention of any useful and ingenious machine. Each candidate must be proposed for election by one of the members, and, in case of election and as proof of his powers, was to pronounce before the assembled academicians a discourse of initiation, either in prose or verse, according to his taste and capability. Artists well known in the realms of painting, sculpture, architecture, etc., might be admitted to the general assembly as associates, but they were not privileged to speak thereat, except upon special invitation. The professors of the Academy were to make known by placard the matter, time, and place of their lectures. Punctuality and zeal were particularly enjoined. The subjects to be taught were literature and writing, especially French, arithmetic, geometry, cosmography, philosophy, theology, and law. Even the style of these lectures was indicated: they were to be concise, dignified, polished, and free from affectation or pedantry. Expenses were to be defrayed by the members. Rules were also laid down as to the various officials of the Academy and the duties that would fall to these.

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* Hamon, l. iv, chap. vi.

After these matters had been settled, the next thing was to choose the first members. A large number of the well-known literary and scientific men of a wide district speedily made known their desire to be enrolled in the new Academy, and from these candidates Francis elected those who possessed the qualifications which had been laid down as essential for membership. He begged Henry of Savoy, Duke of Nemours, to accept the position of protector and president, to which petition the prince consented, on the condition that the Bishop and Antoine Favre agreed to act as vice-presidents, the former in charge of philosophy and theology, the latter in charge of civil law, whilst both of them were to look after the important subject of literature. Finally, the other officials were appointed. When everything was thus organized, the Academy was inaugurated at the house of Antoine Favre, and the Bishop of Geneva signalized the opening session by an eloquent discourse that was the admiration of all present. From then onward things went on successfully for several years. A number of lectures were delivered, and attracted a large number of students from all parts of Savoy, the subjects ranging over a wide field, embracing mathematics and Euclid, various branches of cosmography, navigation, astronomy, the theory of music, the art of fortification, and every branch of mental philosophy.

Unfortunately, this excellent institution did not bear the stress of time. It had the misfortune to lose, after a few years, the practical energy and guidance of Antoine Favre, who, on being appointed President of the Senate of Chambéry, found himself obliged to leave Annecy. In the course of time, also, the Bishop's ecclesiastical duties became more and more engrossing, and he was unable to devote to the Academy the time and attention needed, during those first years, to give it a strength and permanence of its own. It was, perhaps, too ambitious an undertaking for the resources of a small city like Annecy.

In a letter dated February 11, 1607, and written to the Baroness de Chantal, we have one or two little sketches of the Saint and his occupations at this time. Congratulating her on her desire to end some lawsuits in an amicable manner, he says, "Since I returned from my visitation I have been so engaged and overwhelmed in making appointments, that my rooms have been absolutely filled with pleaders, who, thanks be to God! returned home for the most part in peace and quiet. Nevertheless, I must confess that it runs away with my time: but for that there is no remedy, inasmuch as we are bound to devote ourselves to our neighbour's need."

The Bishop also relates that he was engaged at the time in writing the life of a saint. This work, however, was never finished, and no traces of it have been preserved. In the next paragraph we have a delightful sketch of his catechizing the little ones—a picture that is all the more instructive when we remember how strict he was in his ordinary sermons to adults to avoid anything that might savour of humour or jest. With the children his policy was evidently quite different. He writes: "I have just been giving Catechism, where we indulged in some small licence with our children in order to make the audience laugh a little, by making fun of fancy-dress balls and dances: for I was in one of my lighter humours and a large congregation encouraged me by its applause to continue playing the child with my children. They told me it well became me, and I believe it did. May God give me the grace to be truly a child in innocence and simplicity! But am I not very simple indeed to tell you all this?"*

On February 12, 1607, Francis went home to the château of Sales, and stayed there for a short time with the double purpose of taking a little rest and of preparing himself for the Lenten Station which he was to preach that year at Annecy.† Ash Wednesday, therefore, found him at the Church of St Dominic in that city. On that day, February 28, he celebrated Mass in the Chapel of St Mary Magdalen, and then went into the pulpit, where, after telling the people that he would do this every day, he opened the Lenten Station with a sermon full of eloquence and burning zeal. No one was better fitted to evangelize the city than was he: he was intimately acquainted with all that occurred within its walls, he knew the evils from which it suffered and the remedies most suited to cure them. Moreover, the citizens of Annecy were in a particular manner his own people, and he loved them with a deep and sympathetic love. They, on their part, reverenced him as a living saint, ready at all times to come to their help, fearless in his opposition to their faults, and always leading the way to heaven by the example of his own sanctity. They had more reason than any others to know that he practised what he preached. Small wonder, then, that the results of his labours were soon manifested. Large numbers of those who had been leading bad or careless lives were touched to repentance by his exhortations, and found in the wisdom of his guidance a safe and easy path to reformation of conduct. Generally, it was the appeal made by his manifest sympathy that won their hearts, but he was known on suitable occasions to use the instrument of severity. Thus it was that one day, when he was preaching, he noticed some unbecoming conduct on the part of a young nobleman towards a lady of the congregation. Instantly his indignation at this profanity was aflame, and without fear of the consequences or respect of persons, he interrupted his sermon for the purpose of rebuke. "What is this that I see?" he exclaimed. "To what a state of affairs have we arrived, if, in the very house of God and actually during the preaching of his word, you dare to offend him! Put an end to such conduct at once, whoever you may be, and ask pardon of God. Otherwise I will have your name made known to all present, and will rebuke you publicly." This apostrophe had the effect immediately desired, and was in due course the occasion of a conversion. The young nobleman, frankly realizing his fault and repressing a natural impulse to angry pride, afterwards sought out the Bishop and humbly begged his pardon. The Saint was never severe to those who thus showed repentance, and he received the young man's overtures with a kindness that resulted in a complete alteration of conduct.*

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* E.N., Tom. XIII, Lettre CCCLXXXV p. 266

† Gonthier's *Journal*, p. 66.

The work of the Station, meanwhile, was taking its toll of the Bishop's strength. He was of those who never spare themselves in the labours of their apostolate. In addition to his daily preaching, he gave innumerable interviews to those who wished to consult him, spent long hours in the confessional, and officiated at all the big ceremonies of the season. Canon Déage, his old tutor, who still continued to love Francis in the same strong but domineering fashion as of yore, was vexed to see him thus shortening his life by the multiplicity of the tasks which he undertook. The old man had always kept the liberty of speech to which his former position had entitled him, and he now took the Bishop roundly to task, told him that he was indiscreet in taking upon himself so much work, that he was wearing out his strength, and was practically killing himself. "Ah! M. Déage," answered the Bishop with a smile, "you would be very proud of yourself indeed, if you had a disciple who became a martyr and had the happiness of dying, worn out in the service of God and the salvation of souls: but you have brought me up too much of a coward for me to procure you a glory that has become so rare in these times of ours."*

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* C. A. de S., l. vi, p. 442. The biographer remarks that the gentleman was a connection of the Saint's.

Nevertheless, either out of deference to his old tutor or because he found his strength really insufficient for the task he had undertaken, he several times obtained the help of other preachers. He himself assisted at their sermons, in order to give a good example and to show his esteem for the zeal and capability of these auxiliaries. It must be confessed, however, that there was a notable diminution in the numbers of the congregation on the days on which others took his place in the pulpit—so much so that on a certain occasion one of these preachers, a very learned man but not a great orator, found the smallness of the assistance so humiliating that he burst out into invectives against those who had failed to attend his sermon. Such a proceeding was very far from obtaining the Bishop's approval. "Whom was this good person aiming at?" he asked, that day, of one of his household. "He lectured us for a fault which we had not committed, since we were there present. Did he want us to split ourselves up into pieces, to fill the other seats which were empty? His complaint was surely against the absent: but these will be none the wiser for it, since they never heard it."† The preacher's indiscretion, at any rate, succeeded in driving away so many of those who had been used to attending the sermon, that the Bishop found himself obliged for the rest of the time to occupy the pulpit himself. His success was such that he was able to write to Mme. de Chantal: "In truth Lent is the harvest time of souls: I am harvesting here with tears, partly of joy, partly of love."‡

Scarcely had Francis finished this Lenten Station at Annecy than he was obliged to set out for Thonon, in order to assist at the celebration of a two months' jubilee which Father Chérubin had obtained from the Holy See in favour of this town. As we have already seen, he was always glad to return to this scene of his former labours, and he felt it particularly incumbent upon him to watch over the growth of the seed which he himself had implanted amongst these people. He spent four weeks, therefore, in rekindling the fervour of those who had grown cold, in lifting up those who had fallen, and in encouraging the good to still further perfection. Before the religious wars there had existed at Thonon a Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament and of our Lady, and this Confraternity the Bishop was anxious to refound. He inscribed his own name at the head of the lists of the brotherhood, and did everything by word and example to induce the people to join the revived Confraternity. It was not long before the roll of members was a long one. Charles Auguste mentions a pilgrimage, organized for the brotherhood by the Bishop, in order to venerate the relics of St Claud. Whether it took place at this particular time or upon some other occasion is not quite clear. At any rate, it was an undertaking that entailed a certain amount of difficulty, for in order to get to St Claude from Thonon, without entering Geneva, it was necessary to pass through the midst of the country of Vaud, which was peopled by Calvinists. When some of the Confraternity doubted that they would be allowed to traverse this territory in pilgrim procession, with cross, banners, and other religious signs displayed in their midst, the Bishop calmed their fears with a prophecy that they would meet with neither resistance nor harm of any sort. That prophecy was fulfilled by the event.* Meanwhile, the work of the Jubilee was progressing. After attracting to Thonon hundreds of processions and innumerable pilgrims, it came to an end on June 30. Its completion was signalized by the conversion of a well-known lady from Lausanne, who, with her family of eleven children, made submission to the Church.

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* *Année*, Avril 13.

† *Esprit*, Part III, Sect. 18.

‡ E.N., Tom XIII, Lettre CCCXCI, p. 275.

It was during this Jubilee that Francis brought to a successful conclusion a work upon which he had been engaged for some time. This was the reformation of the Abbey of Abondance, situated not far from Thonon. At the time of which we are writing, there lived within the walls of this monastery six monks, all of advanced years, under the rule of Vespasiano Ajazza. The Abbot, a man of exemplary life and great gentleness of character, was distressed by the tepidity of his monks, the more so because he saw that at their time of life reform was almost impossible. Though there was no sign amongst them of any great disorders, they were, nevertheless, leading a life little in harmony with the rule of St Augustine, by which they were supposed to be bound. Ajazza saw clearly that there was nothing to be done but to dismiss the old monks from the monastery, and replace them by fervent religious borrowed from other houses. He had already obtained promise of assistance from the General of the

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* C. A. de S., l. vii, p. 7 of vol. ii. M. Gonthier expresses a doubt as to this pilgrimage in the middle of the Jubilee at Thonon.

Feuillants, a recently reformed branch of the Cistercians, who had engaged to send to Abondance a small colony of his monks; and in order to carry out this change, there was only need of official sanction from the Roman authorities. Francis de Sales, who was seconding the Abbot with all his might, had asked for this approval as far back as 1604 in a letter to Pope Clement VIII. He had renewed his application recently when sending to Rome the official report of his diocese, and eventually had the satisfaction of receiving from the hands of his brother, Jean François, a brief of Paul V authorizing the proposed changes. Francis immediately delegated his Vicar-General to install the Feuillants at the Abbey. Of the six Augustinians only one was allowed to remain at Abondance, and this was the religious who had charge of the parish work of the neighbourhood. The others were sent to various monasteries, each being granted a pension of eight pounds a year to be taken from the revenues of his former house. The result of these changes was soon manifest. The new monks, by the regularity and strictness of their lives, gave edification to the whole neighbourhood, while the fate of their predecessors served as a warning. "A very good and excellent business," writes Charles Auguste, not without a certain grimness. "It put fear into the hearts of all other monks who had forgotten their religious discipline, and served as a spur towards their conversion, unless they also were anxious to be deprived and dispersed in similar fashion."*

Soon after the completion of this task the Bishop received a letter from the Duke of Nemours, informing him officially of the death of Anne d'Este, the dowager Duchess of Nemours, and asking him to preside over the funeral, which, in accordance with the desire of the late Duchess, was to take place at Annecy. Anne d'Este, it may be remembered, was a daughter of one of the Dukes of Ferrara, and a descendant of Lucrezia Borgia. She had been married first of all to Francis of Lorraine, Duke of Guise, who was assassinated at Orleans in 1563. She had afterwards married James of Savoy, Duke of Genevois-Nemours. Her death took place in Paris on May 17, 1607.

On receiving the letter of Henry of Savoy, the Bishop immediately set out for Annecy, in order to make preparations for the obsequies and to await the arrival of the funeral procession. On June 6 Francis went out from Annecy early in the morning to Sillingy, where the body had rested for a time: he was accompanied by a full retinue of the secular and regular clergy, as well as by a distinguished company of the Duke's courtiers and the municipal officials. He arrived at Sillingy at seven o'clock, and immediately said Mass in presence of the body of the deceased lady. So great was the ceremonial, and so difficult the marshalling of the huge crowd of noblemen with their

* C. A. de S., l. vii, p. 7 of vol ii.

jealousies as to precedence, that the funeral procession only reached Annecy by nightfall. The body was placed in the choir of the collegiate church of our Lady, where the Bishop and the clergy recited the Office of the Dead, this function ending an hour before midnight. On the actual day of the burial Francis began the ceremony by preaching the panegyric. Though he had a great predilection for sermons, he felt no inclination at all for this particular class of discourse. "For," he used to say, "unless one takes great care, the spirit of the world goes up into the pulpit, spreads itself forth therefrom in lying praises, and the flattery of the court takes the place of the word of truth." Anxious rather to edify the living than to cast useless flowers upon the tomb of the dead, Francis managed to avoid the inanities of the usual funeral oration. He laid particular emphasis upon the principles of religion which were revealed by the life of the Duchess, and contrasted the well-known excellence of her virtue with the vices of the age, which he censured in a profitable manner by means of a just and understanding criticism. At the end of the Requiem Mass a quaint old feudal custom was performed, when the Princess's major-domo advanced to the choir and there broke his staff of office across his knee.*

When the funeral was over, the Duke of Nemours wrote to Francis, thanking him for the beauty of his discourse, and begging him to send it to the press for publication. Flattering as was this request, it placed Francis in an awkward predicament. He had written nothing for the occasion, apparently not even a pageful of notes, and he was at this time particularly occupied with other writing and with pressing diocesan affairs. He decided, however, to obey the Prince's wish to the best of his ability. Speaking of this task, he wrote to Mme. de Chantal: "I am hard pressed with business. M. de Nemours has so urgently begged me to send him the funeral panegyric of his late mother, that I am forced to write an almost entirely new one: for I do not remember what I said, except in a general way. I find it difficult to do these things, mixed up, as they must be, with a certain amount of worldliness, for which, thanks to God, I have no inclination."† When these things were finished, the Bishop remained at Annecy to preside at an ordination, to officiate at the procession on Corpus Christi, and to hold the annual synod of his clergy. He then set out once more for Thonon, where another task awaited him.

The community which he had founded there, under the title of the Holy House, was in absolute need of the revenues of the priory of St Hippolytus, possessed in the past by the Knights of SS Maurice and Lazarus under conditions already described. Those conditions were such that the Knights were now under an obligation of restoring the revenues to the Church, and it seemed only just that the Holy House, existing in the place of the ancient priory and doing its parochial work, should be the recipients of these incomes. Now the Bishop had been in possession for a year of a brief from the Holy See, authorizing the bestowal of the priory upon the Holy House. Although thus possessed of so strong a right, both by virtue of the brief and by the force of circumstances, the Bishop felt that there was need for considerable tact in using it in such a manner as not to embitter the knights, and cause a further resurrection of opposition on their part. He convoked an assembly of all the principal persons, both clerical and lay, who might be considered to have an interest in the matter, in order that, by giving a more solemn publicity to the effecting of the Papal brief, he might more surely secure for it a greater respect and a lesser risk of opposition. Before this assembly, therefore, he declared, by virtue of his quality of Papal Commissary, the perpetual adjunction of the priory of St Hippolytus to the Holy House, and asserted officially that the Order of SS Maurice and Lazarus had no longer any right over the priory. He then went on to suggest, however, that as the objects of the Holy House and of the Order were avowedly one and the same—namely, the exaltation of the Faith and the destruction of heresy—it was only suitable that they should form, one with another, a religious association. By this alliance the priests of the Holy House, on one side, would be obliged to celebrate Masses and say prayers for the prosperity of the Order: on the other side, the Knights would engage their word to act as protectors of the House. One of the knights in particular should assume the rank and title of Protector of the new establishment, and the priests, on their part, would take an oath of loyalty to him in this quality. The knights, influenced by the Saint's manifest anxiety not to wound the susceptibilities of the Order, made the best of their loss of temporalities and gave to the new proposal their agreement. Francis, striking while the iron was hot, at once appointed Thomas Bergera as Protector, and presided whilst the priests took their oath of fidelity to him. He thus brought this delicate matter to a successful conclusion.*

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* C. A. de S., l. vii, p. 8 of vol. ii; *Année*, Juin 17; *Petites Annales d'Annecy*, par Mugnier, p. 32.

† E.N., Tom. XIII, Lettre CDVIII, p. 311.

The Bishop went from Thonon to Viuz about July 17 (1607). He stayed there for ten days, and it was during this time that he wrote an interesting letter to Mme. de Chantal. In this letter he was encouraging her not to pay any attention to the reiteration of certain worrying thoughts, which the enemy of souls was, so to speak, continually dinning into the ears of her mind. As an object lesson in this matter, he mentions his own treatment of our old friends, the frogs of the marshes of Viuz. "I am here at Viuz," he writes,

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* C. A. de S., l. vii, p. 9 of vol. ii.

" which is an estate belonging to our diocese. Now, the episcopal subjects were in old days obliged, by a formal agreement, to silence the frogs of the neighbouring marshes and ditches, while the Bishop slept. It seems to me to have been a harsh law, and for my own part I have no intention of exacting the performance of this duty. Let them croak as much as they like: provided that the frogs do not bite me, I shall not fail to sleep on their account, if sleepy I feel." He carries the lesson still further by intimating that even if it had been possible for him to silence the constant temptations of which she complained, he would not do so. " No, my dear daughter, if you happened to be here, even then I would not undertake to silence the frogs: but this I would indeed tell you—that you must neither fear, nor worry, nor notice the noise they make."*

From Viuz he went to Sales for one night and then passed on to Annecy to keep the feast of St Peter in Chains. A few days later he returned to Sales in order to help his mother in her annual retreat. It was during this visit to his home that a phenomenally violent storm passed over the district. " We had very heavy thunder and vivid lightning here yesterday evening," he wrote, on August 9, to Mme. de Chantal. " And I was delighted to see our young folks, but particularly my brother, our Groisy (this was Bernard de Sales, Seigneur de Groisy), repeatedly making the sign of the cross and invoking the name of Jesus. ' Ah,' I said to them, ' were it not for these alarms, we should not have prayed our Lord as much as we have done.' Truly I found therein a very great consolation, although the violence of the thunder-claps made me jump and I could not keep from laughing." That the storm was a very serious one we learn in another letter. " My poor mother," he wrote, " experienced the greatest terror on the day when we had such lightning and thunder—of which I wrote you in my last. For the lightning struck several places all around Sales, without doing harm, however, to any creature, but with such torrents of rain and such uproar that never had the like been seen. Everybody crowded into the little chapel."†

On October 7 the Bishop set out on a visitation of certain parishes of his diocese, to which he had not yet had personal access. At one of these places, Le Villaret, a village situated amongst the wildest mountains, he blessed a chapel, which the people had built at the birthplace of Blessed Peter Favre, or Faber, St Ignatius' saintly companion and the first priest of the Society of Jesus. Francis was already acquainted with the life-story of Blessed Peter, having read Father Orlandini's biography, a book in which he had found the greatest edification. After passing some time in prayer before the altar of the chapel, he preached a sermon to the people, in which he signalized the virtues of the one who had been born in their village, and put before them in glowing language the honour which such a birth conferred upon their country and upon the whole of Savoy.* At Thône, which was one of his stopping-places, a curious event took place. He lodged in the house tenanted by Pierre Critain, the parish priest, and during the night was disturbed by all manners of strange noises, which seemed to emanate from every corner of the house. The next morning he mentioned it to his host, and asked the cause of the commotion. The priest replied that the house was well known to be haunted by some sort of spirit, and detailed a number of strange occurrences such as had fallen under his own notice, or had occurred to visitors staying beneath his roof. He himself, apparently, was quite used to these unusual phenomena. Francis, however, was by no means satisfied to allow the continuance of such things, and, calling for a stole and holy water, he exorcized the house in due form. From that moment onward there were no further manifestations on the part of the haunting intruder, and the inhabitants of the house rested at night in all peacefulness.†

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* E.N., Tom. XIII, Lettre CDV, p. 301.

† *Ibid.*, Lettres CDVII and CDVIII.

Pursuing the course of his visitation from parish to parish, the Bishop arrived at St George de Mornex on October 30. It was here that he received news of the death of his youngest sister, Jeanne. A short time previously Mme. de Chantal, while on a visit to Annecy, had asked leave of Mme. de Boisy and of the Bishop to take charge of this charming child for a period, and to take her back with her on returning to Burgundy. Francis, realizing that he could not procure for his sister a better education than that which this saintly lady could give her, had accorded his permission joyfully. Unfortunately, no sooner had Jeanne arrived in Burgundy than she had fallen ill of fever, accompanied by dysentery, and, in spite of all the care lavished upon her by the anxious Mme. de Chantal, had died at Thoste, on October 7, at the age of fourteen.

On hearing the news of this catastrophe, the Bishop interrupted the course of his visitation and hastened to Sales, in order to comfort his aged mother. How that mother bore the blow which death thus inflicted upon her, we learn from a letter written by the Saint to Mme. de Chantal on November 1, 1607.

"Well, my dear daughter," he wrote, "is it not reasonable that the holy will of God be done, just as much with regard to those things which we love as with regard to others? But I must needs hasten to tell you that my good Mother drank of this chalice with an altogether Christian fortitude, and her virtue, of which I had always held so high an opinion, surpassed by far the measure of my esteem.

"On Sunday morning she sent for my brother, the Canon, and because she had noticed that he and all the other brothers had been very sad the evening before, she began by saying to him: 'I dreamt all night that my daughter Jeanne is dead. Tell me, I beg you—is it true?' My brother, who was awaiting my arrival before telling her what had happened—for I was on a visitation—seeing how excellent was this opportunity of breaking to her the news, as she lay there in bed, answered: 'It is true, mother,' and no more, for he had not sufficient strength to add anything further. 'The will of God be done,' said my good mother: and for a time she wept heavily.

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* *Introduction à la Vie Dévote*, Part II, Sect. 16.

† C. A. de S., l. vii, p. 12 of vol ii.

"Then, calling her maid, Nicole, she said: 'I want to get up, in order to go to the chapel and pray to God for my poor daughter.' And immediately she did as she had said. Not a single word of impatience, not the slightest sign of disquiet, but only repeated acts of praise to Almighty God and constant acts of resignation to his will. Never, truly, have I seen such resignation in grief: tears, indeed, there were in abundance, but all this arising only from the deep emotions of her heart, without any kind of pride. Yet the child was her best beloved. How I am forced to love her, then, this mother of mine!

"Yesterday, All Saints' Day, I was the general confessor of the family, and with the Blessed Sacrament I sealed the heart of this mother against all sadness. For the rest, she gives you infinite thanks for the care and motherly love which you lavished upon our little one, feeling just as great an obligation towards you as if through that care God had chosen to preserve her. And such is the feeling of the whole family. . . .

"I know well that you will be wanting to say to me: 'And you, how have you borne it?' Yes, indeed, for you like to know what I am doing. Alas! my daughter, I am nothing other than human: my heart has been touched more than I had ever thought to be possible, but the truth is that my mother's grief and yours contributed greatly thereto, for I feared for your courage and for hers. But as for the rest—blessed be Jesus!—I will always take the part of Divine Providence: it does all and disposes of all for the best. . . .

"You can imagine, my dear daughter, how deeply I loved that little child. I had begotten her to the Lord, for I had baptized her with my own hands some fourteen years ago: she was the first creature upon whom I exercised my order of priesthood. I was her spiritual father, and was intending some day to make great things of her: and what made her still dearer to me—and I say it in all truth—was that she had given herself to you. But nevertheless, my dear daughter, in the midst of my heart of flesh, which has felt this death so deeply, I am very sensible of a certain sweetness, tranquillity, and restfulness of mind in the thought of Divine Providence, which produces throughout my soul a great consolation in the midst of its grief."

It seems that Mme. de Chantal, in the midst of her anxiety over Jeanne de Sales, had offered to God her own life and even the life of one of her children, in order to gain by this sacrifice the life of the beloved child entrusted to her. Francis did not approve of this offering.

"I did not find it good that you should have offered your life, or the life of some one of your other children, in exchange for that of the dead child. No, my dear daughter! We must not only agree that God should strike us, but also that he should do so wherever it may please him: we must leave the choice to God, for it belongs to him. David offered his life for that of Absalom, but that was because Absalom was dying in a state of perdition: and in that case, indeed, we should conjure God. But in temporal losses, O my daughter, let God touch and strike where he will, and upon any string of our lute that he shall choose; he will never draw therefrom aught but the truest harmony. O Lord Jesus! without reserve, without if, without but, without exception, without limitation, may thy will be done upon father, mother, daughter, in all and throughout all. Ah! I do not say that we must not desire and pray for their preservation: but to say to God—leave this and take that—is a thing we must never say. And so we will not do it, will we? No, my daughter, not with the help of his divine goodness. . . .

"Since you wish to have the funeral there where the child's body rests, I find this good, but let it be without any great pomp beyond what Christian usage demands. For of what use is all the rest? Afterwards you will have a list drawn up of all these expenses and of those of her sickness, and will send it to me. This I insist upon. Meanwhile we will offer up here our prayers to God for this soul, and will lovingly pay her the little honours of her childhood. As regards her month's mind, we will do nothing. No, my daughter, so much ado would not be suitable in the case of a little maid who has never held any rank in the world: it would be a matter for ridicule. You know me well: I love simplicity both in death and in life. But I should very much like to know the name and title of the Church wherein she rests."*

After having spent a few days at Sales in comforting his mother and the other members of his family, the Bishop set out once more, on November 4, along the course he had planned for his visitation. Difficult though the travelling must have been in this late time of the autumn, he succeeded in visiting wellnigh forty places before he returned to Annecy on November 22. Here he had arranged to preach the usual course of Advent sermons. He had grown to feel an intense affection for the little city and its inhabitants. On October 12, he had written to M. Deshayes a letter in which he records this feeling, though at the same time he mentions a matter which was the cause of a certain amount of unrest. This was the jealousy among some of the Duke of Nemours' courtiers against Antoine Favre. "I hope to retire for the winter to our little town of Annecy, in which I have learnt to find my happiness, since it is the bark in which I must make my passage from this life to the other. And I should find still greater happiness therein if it were not for these little quarrels which break out every day amongst the Duke's officers. Some of these are becoming much too bitter against our good M. Favre, of whose gentle temper and age they take every advantage. The blame for this lies with the Duke, who, with complete indifference, allows them to bring accusations against that good gentleman: it ought to be made clear that the Duke has every confidence in him, in his capability and loyalty, as, indeed, is only his due. That would put an end to all this unpleasantness. . . ."*

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* E.N., Tom. XIII, Lettre CDXVIII, p. 328 *et seq.*

* *Ibid.*, Lettre CDXVI, p. 324.

CHAPTER XXII*

(1607–1608)

Letter to Prince Maurice of Savoy—Nomination of Abbé Fenouillet to see of Montpellier—Lenten Station of Rumilly—Conversion of two ladies—Henry IV offers Francis a French bishopric—The Saint reconciles two apostate priests at Thonon—Incident of the salt—Francis wins over a deacon who had become a soldier—He successfully answers false accusations made in Rome against his administration

NOT long after the Bishop's return to Annecy he received news that Prince Maurice, the fourth son of Charles Emmanuel, had been nominated to the cardinalate. The young prince was then fourteen years old. However adverse the criticism of our days may be with regard to such an appointment, the custom of those times robbed it of its strangeness for the people who were contemporary, and Francis hastened to write a letter of congratulation to the cardinal-elect.

"The fair promises which heaven has made to earth by the medium of your promotion," wrote the Bishop, "give reason to the whole Church to bless Divine Providence, which thereby grants to the great Apostolic See a column of great price and of eminent dignity. But this diocese of Geneva must experience thereat an altogether special joy: it now finds itself doubly assured of Your Highness's protection by reason of the blood from which you spring and of that other which dyes your sacred robes. For the colour of purple only holds there its place, in order to represent the blood of Our Saviour, in which the princes of the Church should ever temper their zeal." The Bishop then prays that every blessing may be poured upon the prince, and that by his virtue and piety he may do a great work in the Church.† Maurice of Savoy, as a matter of fact, never took Orders, and eventually in 1642 he resigned his cardinalate, in order to marry Princess Louise Marie.

An event which occurred about this time and which gave the Saint a great happiness was the nomination of the Abbé Fenouillet to the bishopric of Montpellier. This priest, who was a doctor of divinity and a celebrated preacher, was a native of Annecy. He had at first been a parish priest in the diocese, a benefice which he had won in a *concursus* against a number of highly gifted ecclesiastics: then he had been appointed a member of the cathedral chapter, and before long showed such evident signs of talent that Francis had no hesitation in recommending him as preacher for the Lenten Station in the Church of St Benedict in Paris. His career in the French capital was so brilliant, his success as a pulpit orator so remarkable, and his learning and virtue so evident that before long he attracted the attention of Henry IV. That monarch, always on the lookout for men to whom he could entrust responsible positions, eventually nominated him to the see of Montpellier.

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* Hamon, l. iv, chap. vii.

† E.N., Tom. XIII, Lettre CDXXIV, p. 345.

To Francis de Sales, as the Ordinary of the nominee, fell the task of supplying to the Holy See the necessary testimonials in favour of the candidate for the episcopacy, and these testimonials he gave with the greatest happiness, certain that the merits of the Abbé Fenouillet were such as would render him most suitable for his new position.

Towards the end of February, 1608, the Saint went to Rumilly, a little town situated some nine miles from Annecy, where he preached the Lenten Station. This was a task dear to his heart. He had a deep affection for the simple folk who crowded around his pulpit and besieged his confessional, and it gave him the greatest pleasure to find that, in spite of the intense reverence which they had for the episcopal dignity, they came to him without fear, as children to a loving father. During whatever spare time he could procure from the work of the station he visited the neighbouring parishes and exercised his ministry therein for the benefit of both priests and people. When Holy Week came he blessed the Holy Oils in the parish church of Rumilly.* On his return to Annecy he spoke with great feeling to one of his friends about his labours during this Lent: "I have just returned," he said, "from a delightful experience: I have been instructing a kindly, humble, and devout people. Often enough in the great towns one sees nothing but pride amongst the rich and powerful, who think a great deal too much of themselves. But in these little towns and villages are my own real people: for with avidity, devotion, and humility do they listen to the word of God." In another letter he mentions the effect upon himself of this humility and simplicity, and describes how it drew him nearer to grace and drove from him the influence of flattery and pride.

About this time two ladies of Geneva came to Annecy, in order to visit some relatives. Being curious to see the Bishop, of whom they had heard many reports, they procured an introduction to him by means of one of their friends. It was only natural that during conversation with Francis the subject of religion should be broached and that the ladies should put forward some of their objections to the Catholic faith. These the Bishop answered, refuting at the same time several of the more characteristic errors of Calvin. The ladies went away, impressed without doubt, but by no means convinced. Nevertheless, on returning to the home of their hosts, they found their minds assailed by several difficulties suggested by their recent conversation, and after a time asked for a second interview with Francis de Sales. Their request was granted immediately, and the discussion renewed. This time, however, the result was different: struck by the logic of the Bishop's answers, persuaded by his eloquence and led on by the light of grace, they conceived the most serious doubts as to the validity of their own position. Those doubts continued to develop in their minds until they passed into the stage of certainties: eventually the two ladies capitulated, and made their submission to the Church, of which they remained devout and faithful adherents to the end of their lives.*

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* Gonthier's *Journal*, April 3, 1608, p. 83.

In the meanwhile, circumstances had once more brought to the notice of Henry IV of France the name of the Bishop of Geneva. Deshayes, the King's secretary, was in continual correspondence with Francis and doubtless often spoke of him; Bishop Fenouillet was another admirer of the Saint amongst those who had occasional access to the King; and lately Francis himself had been obliged to write to Henry about the financial troubles of the parish priests in the bailiwick of Bugey. At any rate, it happened one day that the King inquired of Deshayes the amount of the income received by the Bishop of Geneva: and, on learning how insignificant it was, said to his secretary, "I commission you to invite the Bishop on my part to come to Paris. So poor a bishopric is not worthy of him. I will give him a position that shall correspond more fully with his merits."

Deshayes did as he was told, and Francis, on receiving the letter, showed it to his brother Louis. "Is it not amazing," he said, "how very human are the thoughts of our friends? God be thanked! they do not tempt me. I am where God wants me, since it was his hand that placed me here. It is true that Annecy is not a great city, but it is sufficient for me who am worth nothing at all. Even if I were a good workman, it would still be quite enough, since it enables me every day to attack the enemies of the Church upon these frontiers of their Babylon."†

In answer to the royal invitation, the Bishop wrote two letters to his friend: one of an official character, to be shown to the King, if necessary; the other a personal explanation of his position for the benefit of Deshayes alone. In the former he writes: "Your letter of April 21 inspires me with admiration for the goodness of the King, who not only does me the honour of remembering me, but even of wishing me kindness and of considering me capable of giving him satisfaction in the service of the Church within his realm. You can well imagine, sir, how flattered I was. Of a truth it was so, and I might have allowed myself to be carried away thereby, if my knowledge of my own insufficiency had not stopped me: for this honour does not dazzle me to such an extent that I cannot see clearly enough the bounds and limitations of my capacity, which is without doubt very mean and narrow.

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* C. A. de S., l. vii, p. 17 of vol. ii. The names of the ladies were Dame Simonette Gal and Dame Jeanne Degaillon.

† Hamon quotes for this the *Année de S François de Sales*, but the account in that book differs from his version. According to the *Année* Francis received the letter of invitation from the Governor of Montargis when he was preaching at La Roche: and the Bishop calls attention to the smallness, not of Annecy, but of La Roche.

"Therefore I beg you, sir, to learn from His Majesty what he would intend to do with me and in what way he would wish to employ me: for it is certain that I am of no use for many things, and have none the less sufficient feeling of honour to be unwilling to receive an appointment, except for what I actually am and for a purpose that comes within my power. And this all the more because it would come from the favour and grace of so great a king, who would not bethink himself of transplanting me from this country to his own realm—rich as it is in every kind of talent—unless he considered me likely to produce results and to afford him satisfaction. . . .

"God has given me the grace to realize that I was made for him, by him, and in him. I am not, nor ever will be, so long as Heaven grants me light, a fortune hunter. For this reason I will never refuse to go wherever I may be called for the service of the Divine glory: but especially is this true of France, towards which, having been nourished and educated beneath its skies, I am fain to confess that I have a special inclination. Moreover, this inclination is especially strong whilst France is under the rule of a King whom I am bound to honour and esteem so highly, and who puts me under such deep obligations. It is true that I am here in my own country and amongst my own people, together with a competence that suffices me, and, what is still dearer to me, with as much peace of mind as my charge allows and with every prospect of its duration in the future. But even all this would have no hold upon me, and would have no power to stop my embarking upon any other service in which I might consider myself to be more usefully employed for the glory of God and the good of the Church. For both my Baptism and my vocation consecrated me to that end.

"If, then, His Majesty will tell you what is his particular intention in my regard, then, with the help of God and in his presence, I will examine my qualifications therefor: and if I feel that they are in any way suitable for the service which he desires, and if His Holiness gives me his command (for you know well that otherwise I would not venture to move from the post to which I have been assigned), I would give myself up with all readiness, promptitude, and zeal to follow the divine vocation, not doubting that it is such a call, when I see in unison the wills of the Pope and of the King."*

It was not long before news of these proposals reached the ears of Mme. de Chantal, and she at once hastened to express to the Saint her intense anxiety at the possibility of losing him. He comforted her with the following words: "Do not lose your peace of mind, my very dear daughter: for nothing will happen except what is in accordance with the good pleasure of God's divine majesty and under his guidance."† In a later letter he gives an indication as to what were his real feelings in the matter. Though he was prepared to go whithersoever God called him, this did not prevent him from realizing his own inclinations. "Indeed, believe me, my dear daughter (but, look you, speak of it to no one—I tell you everything), it would not be without repugnance if I were obliged to change my home, although I feel no attachment except to a few souls and that with a bond which, thanks be to God, is quite purely spiritual."‡

Francis did not stay long at Annecy. Having been invited by the Duke of Savoy to go to Thonon for the purpose of a consultation with the President of the Senate of Chambéry about several matters of importance, he set out on June 12 (1608). During this visit to Thonon he reconciled to the Church two religious, who had apostatized, but who had repented of their sin, and had come to Thonon for the purpose of making their abjuration. The Saint, seeing their sincerity, treated them with the greatest kindness. Speaking of this event in a letter to Baroness de Chantal, he wrote: "Lately, I made a journey to Thonon, to reconcile some talented ecclesiastics who had gone over to the Huguenots, under the influence of temptations against morality. Alas! what a fall had been theirs! It was a great consolation for me to see them return to the arms of the Church and to realize the great struggle which they underwent for that purpose. Alas! they were religious, and the one a Jesuit. Youth and pride and the flesh had carried them down into this abyss in spite of the voice of conscience. The Jesuit especially, telling me about his fall, moved me to great pity and to all the more joy by his resolution in returning. What a grace I received in having spent so much time amongst the heretics—young and weak as I was—and having been so often tempted by the same baits without that my heart would ever even look at these wretched and unhappy objects! Blessed be the loving hand of my God, which held me up firmly in the midst of this strife!"§ The two priests experienced such happiness in their reconciliation that, in order to persuade others to follow their recent example, they published the story of their conversion in a small volume, which they sent to Berne.* The first of the two, Pierre Gilette, persevered in his conversion and eventually occupied important posts in the Holy House of Thonon: the second, Claud Boucard, fell away from his resolutions and lapsed once more; later on, however, he again came under the influence of St Francis, and having been again reconciled to the Church, lived a good life as a Catholic until he died.

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* E.N., Tom. XIV, Lettre CDXLIX, p. 9.

† *Ibid.*, Lettre CDLI, p. 13.

‡ *Ibid.*, Lettre CDLII, p. 15.

§ *Ibid.*, Lettre CDLXI, p. 35. See also note to this letter.

Speaking of this visit to Thonon, the Saint said: " That journey to Thonon is one of the happiest I ever made in my life, not only because the divine impulse alone inspired me to make it, but also because the simple and frank account which these young priests gave to me of their vocation and their fall, supplied me with the greatest light for the direction of souls, as well as with a salutary and intimate warning as regards my own vocation."†

After finishing the work which had brought him to Thonon, the Saint set out on his return journey to Annecy. On his way home he stopped at the house of Bernard Mojonnier, the parish priest of Machilly, who, having been formerly curate of Thorens, was an old friend of the family. It was while dining at this priest's table that he gave unwittingly a proof of his spirit of mortification, which he had cultivated to such an extent that he seems scarcely to have noticed the quality of the food given to him. For the servant had by mistake put flour into the salt-cellars instead of salt, and Francis, having sprinkled his food with this unusual condiment, continued his meal quite contentedly without making any remark. The other guests were not slow to detect the mistake, and waited for the Bishop to make a similar discovery. Eventually they were unable to conceal their amusement, and one of them ventured to exclaim: " This is a very gentle kind of salt. Most assuredly, however, it is not sugar. It seems to me, as far as I am a judge, to be nothing other than flour." " I assure you," remarked the Bishop with a smile, " that I really believed it to be salt, and it seemed just the same to my palate."‡

On reaching his home, he found further trouble awaiting him. He learnt that one of his deacons had left the ecclesiastical state in order to embrace a military career. The Bishop immediately sent a member of his household to request this man to come and see him: the delinquent's only reply was to lose his temper and strike the messenger. Francis then wrote a letter in which he felt constrained to threaten the deacon with punishment. When this communication had no effect, he resorted to means dearer to his heart than severity, and writing once more in a more personal tone, used every persuasive argument he could devise to bring the recalcitrant cleric to a better frame of mind. "Take pity on your own soul and on mine," he implored. Scarcely had the deacon read this letter than he felt himself overcome by its charity. Casting aside his uniform, he once more put on his cassock and sought the presence of his bishop, in order to obtain forgiveness. The Saint received him with the deepest joy and feeling, heard his confession, gave him absolution, and re-established him in his former vocation. The man's repentance was sincere, and he persevered in the clerical state to the day of his death.*

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* C. A. de S., l. vii, p. 19 of vol. ii.

† *Année*, Juin 14. The *Année* differs from Charles Auguste de Sales in that it says the Saint undertook the journey to Thonon without any particular external reason, but " impelled thereto interiorly by a movement of the Holy Spirit."

‡ C. A. de S., l. vii, p. 19 of vol. ii.

About this time Francis was informed by an ecclesiastic returning from Rome that a certain religious had made complaint to the Pope about the Bishop of Geneva. The accusation was that the Bishop spent too much of his time in the spiritual direction of certain devout souls, that in consequence the affairs of the diocese were suffering, and that in particular a great number of heretical books, emanating from Geneva, were allowed to circulate amongst the faithful without any attempt at suppression and with great injury to the faith of Catholics. Charles Auguste de Sales mentions that the informer was none other than Father Chérubin of Maurienne: it is quite possible that the impetuous zeal of the good Franciscan may have led him to some hasty and ill-advised action, but there is reason for thinking that possibly his report was connected with another diocese and that there had been some confusion in the narration of events.†

Francis at once wrote to a Cardinal in Rome to repel the accusation. In the meanwhile, he made no complaint to anyone against his accuser, and though he confided his trouble to his brother, Louis de Sales, and to President Favre, he did so without a word of bitterness or recrimination. In his letter to the Cardinal the Saint wrote as follows: "Certainly, if this thing were true, His Holiness would have the greatest reason, not only to be indignant with me, but to punish my negligence—nay, truly, my treason. But allow me to tell you the real state of affairs. When, recently, I made a general visitation of my diocese, without exception of a single parish, I found absolutely no heretics in those parishes which were not occupied by the Bernese and Genevans, nor any prohibited book, except a few which, out of negligence and contempt, lay buried deeply in the dust of some house or other; and our Catholics are actuated by such scruples that, when they have any doubt about a book, they either throw it into the fire or submit it to the delegates. It is true, indeed, that the Genevans publish many most pestilent books, but it is by no means true that these books are read by our people of Savoy.

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* Hamon quotes dep. of Langin.

† See note in E.N., Tom. XIV, Lettre CDLXIII, p. 42.

"Having said this, I confess that I do not employ all that diligence which is needed: nevertheless, in all that is possible to the poorness of my capabilities I am faithful and sincere, and, though strength and natural ability may be denied me, yet there will be found in my conduct neither treachery nor lack of courage."*

The answer which the Saint received from Rome was completely reassuring. The Holy Father, he was told, now paid no credence to the complaints of the informer; he entertained for the Bishop of Geneva the sincerest admiration and affection; and esteemed him greatly as a brother and loved him as a son. This reply brought the greatest consolation to Francis. "Ah!" he said, "I feel now that I am more than ever a true son of the Holy See. For it seems to me that God has given me back the joy of his salvation (*la joie de son salutaire*), and indeed I do not know how I should live if I knew that the father of all the children of God was vexed and dissatisfied with my conduct."†

* Lettre CDLXIII.

† C. A. de S., l. vii, p. 20 of vol. ii: *Année*, Juillet 5.

CHAPTER XXIII[*]

(1608–1609)

Journey to Burgundy—Reformation of the abbey of Puits-d'Orbe—Francis returns to Annecy—Two Calvinists converted—Settlement of a family dispute as to M. de Boisy's will—Publishes the "Introduction to the Devout Life"—History, analysis, and success of this work—The Saint's book is criticized in public: his answer

On or about August 18 (1608) Francis set out for Burgundy. The main object of this journey was to fulfil a commission confided to him by the Holy See with regard to the reformation of the convent of Puits-d'Orbe, with the Abbess of which he had already had a long correspondence. On his way to his new destination he passed by St Rambert in Le Bugey. Here he was asked to act as arbiter in a serious and complicated lawsuit between the members of a noble family of the district. The Saint, having been accepted as judge by both parties, examined the case carefully for three days, and finally gave a judgement which ended the litigation and put an end to a long-standing quarrel.[†]

To a letter, written on August 21 from St Rambert to Mme. de Charmoisy, Francis de Sales adds the following postscript: "To-day I finish my forty-first year. Pray to our Lord that he will make the rest of my age useful to his glory and to my own salvation. God be ever in the midst of your heart."[‡]

On the morning of August 24 the Saint was at Montceny, not far from Monthelon, where Mme. de Chantal was living, and whither he sent a note apprising that lady of his coming. On the same day he went to Autun, making a call upon the bishop of that city and paying a visit to the cathedral and to the convent of the Capuchin fathers. That evening he arrived at Monthelon. Two or three days afterwards, accompanied by President Frémiot, Mme. de Chantal and her brother, the Bishop of Bourges, the Saint visited the hospital at Beaune, and thence passed on to the abbey of Puits-d'Orbe.

The Bishop was already well acquainted with the state of affairs that reigned at the abbey, because, as we have already seen, he had carried on a long correspondence with the Abbess and had striven

[*] Hamon, l. iv, chap. viii.

[†] C. A. de S., l. vii, p. 21 of vol. ii.

[‡] E.N., Tom. XIV, Lettre CDLXXIV, p. 58.

[§] Gonthier's *Journal*, p. 88.

to direct her in her efforts at reform. Before undertaking anything in the way of corrective legislation, Francis gave the nuns a number of conferences, in which he endeavoured to convince them of the necessity of a change in their manner of life. He showed them that nothing could give them happiness on earth except purity of conscience and peace of heart; that they would have neither the one nor the other unless they were faithful to their rule and their duties; that the liberty which had been introduced into their monastery could only have the most unfortunate results for all of them; and that, once they had resolved to leave the world, they should never dream of returning to it in any way. After having thus prepared the way, he told them that the Holy See had ordered him to re-establish amongst them in all its rigour the rule of St Benedict, but that, nevertheless, in order not to make matters too difficult for the weakness of some amongst them, he proposed to grant a certain latitude in some matters in a way which, he felt sure, he could justify to the Holy See. He then laid down that in future no men were to be allowed entrance into that part of the Abbey reserved for the nuns, except those who had necessary business therein, such as doctors, carpenters, or workmen. He forbade the Sisters to leave the house except in order to take a walk together, and ordered that on these occasions at least half the community should be of the party. He then decided that the visits of the Sisters to the houses of their relatives and other places—an abuse which had become regrettably common—should be stopped, or, at least, should be as rare as possible: amongst other reasons for this the Bishop told them that some of the relatives themselves had explicitly recommended this reform. For the use of visitors, who had reason to see the nuns, he appointed a parlour outside the enclosure or a part of the abbey gardens: on such occasions the nun visited was to be accompanied by two other Sisters, who, however, were to withdraw to a sufficient distance to ensure privacy in the conversation of the visited Sister and her friends. He decreed that the confessional for the Sisters should be placed at the junction of the choir and the sanctuary, and that the choir and sanctuary should be separated by some sort of a grill with an opening or openings, through which the priest might give Holy Communion. A Prioress was to be elected each year by the Sisters, and, in the absence or sickness of the Abbess, was to rule the community, but was not to take her place in the choir. Each Friday the community was to hold a chapter, after preparing therefor by a reading of part of the rule or of some book dealing with religious discipline. Finally the Bishop recommended, without, however, any positive command, that any money possessed by the Sisters should be placed in the hands of the Abbess, with the intention that she should provide for the necessities of all: if some of the Sisters refused for the time being to accept this recommendation, then the only thing left was to wait until God should inspire them with the grace to make the necessary sacrifice.*

Such were, in substance, the rules which Francis gave to the abbey. In order to help the Abbess to enforce them, he recommended her to teach her nuns humility and simplicity of heart, because, he said, " nothing can be done with a soul that is vain and full of self-esteem "; she herself was to give good example in all things, because " a Superioress speaks in vain if she is not the first to practise what she teaches "; her best policy was to be gentle and compassionate, because " the most perfect government is that which resembles Providence, and Providence is calm and peaceful in the midst of every kind of happening, betrays no feeling in its greatest activity, and fashions itself to all things "; finally, the Abbess was to forestall, as much as possible, the slightest complaints, was to choose her novices with care, and was to warn them from the beginning that the spirit of mortification and obedience is the soul and life of the cloister.

Having accomplished this task, the Bishop returned to Dijon on September 1. Here he was able to help the Carmelite nuns of the town, who were in considerable trouble about a lawsuit with which they were threatened. They referred the matter to Francis: he examined the case thoroughly, settled it to the satisfaction of both parties, and thus brought peace once more to the good Sisters. It was here also that he received a visit from the Abbot of Cîteaux, who gave him full powers to reform the nuns of the Cistercian abbey of St Catherine, near Annecy.†

Francis returned to Annecy in the early days of September, calling on the way at the château of Sales, in order to visit his mother, whose health was now beginning to decline under the stress of her years. On October 17 he set out on a visitation of some twenty parishes lying to the west of Annecy, during which tour his zeal and eloquence achieved once more the success of his former visits.‡ He was returning from these labours, when he made the acquaintance of two young Protestants of Geneva, Jean Montou and Jacques Gradel. Needless to say, he at once laid siege to their souls, and had the happiness of seeing his efforts crowned with success. After receiving them into the Church, he insisted on their staying at his house, for neither of the new Catholics, probably by reason of their conversion, had any means of making a livelihood, and he made them remain as his guests until he had found employment for them, suitable to their capabilities and position.§

It was about this time that there developed in the family of Sales a crisis, which for a time threatened its ordinary characteristic of unity and affection. This was caused by the peculiar provisions of M. de Boisy's will. Anxious that his numerous children should remain together, he had expressed a desire on his deathbed that the family property should remain undivided: he had, however, ordained that, if his children decided to split up the property, the division was to be made by the eldest son, and that, instead of drawing lots, the youngest son should have the first choice, and so on with the others in the inverse order to their ages. The whole family decided to divide the property, but the order of choice, as indicated by their late father, seemed to several of the heirs exceedingly unsuitable. Particularly severe was its operation upon Louis de Sales, who had been a devoted son and was a model of all that a Christian gentleman should be. If Louis himself was prepared to carry out his father's wishes, it was by no means the same with his wife, and one can hardly blame her for her attitude. Francis, however, took the highest view, and was equally distressed by the suggested violation of his father's last wishes and by the danger of the disunion amongst his brothers, of whom there were four living in the world. Jean François was, of course, an ecclesiastic. The Bishop, full of a desire for peace, begged Louis not to give way to the suggestions of his wife, but to do all that was possible to bring about a peaceful solution of the difficulty. Louis had always entertained the strongest love for his eldest brother and the deepest respect for the latter's counsel: he accordingly represented to his wife that peace and goodwill amongst the members of a family were the most precious of all assets; that any material advantage which they might gain by altering his father's last dispositions was not worth the family discord that would result therefrom; and was certainly not equivalent to the loss of friendship of such a saint as the Bishop of Geneva. Accepting these arguments, Louis's wife withdrew her opposition. An agreement was reached, and the wishes of M. de Boisy with regard to the method of partition were carried out. The division took place on November 14, 1608. Bernard de Sales, the youngest but one of the brothers, became Seigneur of Thorens and Sales; Louis received the lordship of La Thuille; and Gallois those of Boisy and Groisy.* It is interesting to notice that in the sequel Louis de Sales did not lose by his peace-making spirit, for Bernard de Sales and his heir died early, and the heritage of Thorens and Sales passed to Louis and his family.

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* C. A. de S., l. vii, p. 22: Opuscules, Blaise, p. 434.

† Gonthier's *Journal*, Septembre 1, 1608, p. 88.

‡ *Ibid.*, pp. 88-90.

§ *Ibid.*, p. 91; C. A. de S., l. vii, p. 30 of vol. ii.

It was about this time that Francis put the last touches to the book by which he is most generally known: this was the *Introduction to the*

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* No mention is made by M. Hamon of Janus de Sales, the youngest brother, in this division of the property. He was twenty years old at the time, and perhaps was not yet capable of inheriting. Boisy afterwards fell to Jean François (*vide Vie de Philothée*, by Jules Vuy, p. 275).

Devout Life. In order to give the best account of the origin and history of this work we cannot do better than quote the Preface written by Dom Mackey for the edition of the *Introduction* published in the *Oeuvres Complètes de Saint Francois de Sales* by the Visitation of Annecy.

"The peculiar conditions in the midst of which our Saint's life was passed may be described as the immediate cause of the production of the book of which we are writing: and the visit he made to Paris as Coadjutor of Geneva in 1602 must have had a very special influence in the history of its genesis. Mme. Acarie, De Bérulle, Gallemand, Beaucousin, De Soulfour, Duval, De Brétigni formed a school of spirituality which diffused around itself a brilliant light of learning and was productive of the very highest virtues. The Apostle of Chablais, whose reputation spread quickly throughout the capital, was not long in making the acquaintance of these eminent men, and if he was not called upon to direct the masters, he, at any rate, gave counsel to the disciples, who had recourse in great numbers to the illumination of his wisdom and experience.

"At this time especially the Saint must have felt deeply that for the direction of these souls there was lacking some treatise, which should gather together in a concise and practical form the principles of the spiritual life, and which should make their application easy for people in every grade of society."

And here a word of explanation must be interjected. "At this time," says M. Hamon, "ecclesiastical writers had not yet undertaken—at any rate, in France—the publication of clear and practical books, to guide along the way of perfection those men and women who were engaged in the occupations of ordinary family life. Priests and monks scarcely wrote for any but the clergy and convents. It resulted from this that the great crowds of people living in the world were deprived of guidance suitable to their needs, and were persuaded that the life of perfection was incompatible with the domestic life of the laity. The Bishop of Geneva, with his deep understanding of the needs of society, fully realized the extent of the loss inflicted upon many souls by this abnormal situation."*

"Accordingly," says Dom Mackey, "as early as this year 1602 the Saint was gathering together those first materials which later on were to contribute to the formation of his book. In a letter, written in 1604 to Rose Bourgeois, Abbess of Puits-d'Orbe, after having spoken to her of peace of soul, he adds these remarkable words: 'If I had my papers here, I would send you a treatise which I wrote in Paris on this subject for the benefit of a spiritual daughter—a nun belonging to an excellent convent—who had need of it both for herself and others.' The name of the Abbess of Puits-d'Orbe recalls to mind the Lent preached at Dijon in 1604 and the relations which from that time onward existed between the Bishop of Geneva and Mme. de Chantal. Nevertheless, the devout baroness was not the only one to benefit by the zeal of her holy director: still other souls became the object of his fatherly solicitude. In addition to Rose Bourgeois there should be mentioned Mme. Brulart, her sister, and Mme. de Villers, who, after having received verbal advice from St Francis de Sales, continued in active correspondence with him from 1604 to 1608. The letters which he addressed to Mme. de Chantal, and to these pious friends, were not merely rules of direction applicable to the peculiar needs of each: while at the same time recommending to them the reading of the fathers, of the books of St Teresa, of Louis of Granada, of the *Spiritual Combat*, he sent them a certain number of documents which they were to pass from one to the other. These writings are all found in the *Introduction*. . . .

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* Hamon, vol. i, p. 627.

"We have, then, no hesitation in contradicting certain historians, according to whom the *Introduction* was composed principally, or even solely, at the request of Henry IV. That prince, it is true, urged the Bishop to employ the exceptional gifts which he had received from God in opening up to souls the paths towards solid piety. The deposition of Deshayes with regard to this subject is of the greatest interest, and its full reproduction here will be welcomed by all. 'On account of the excellent opinion which the late King entertained for the sanctity of the blessed prelate, he ordered me to write to the latter on his behalf to the effect that he saw many of his subjects living in every kind of liberty and saying that the goodness and greatness of God took no very great heed of the actions of men—a thing which the King greatly blamed. But that there were others, also very numerous, who had so poor an opinion of God, as to think that he was always ready to take them unawares, and only waited for the moment when they had fallen into some slight fault, to damn them for all eternity: of the which also he did not approve. The King desired that between these two extremes the servant of God, who was destined to preach in that city (Paris), should instruct his subjects and should guide them away from these exaggerations by his sermons and conferences, and also by the books which he would publish. . . . And I, obeying the King's command, communicated all these things to the Servant of God, who sent me a letter for His Majesty in which he gave assurance that in his sermons and in the books which he would publish he would not fail to give all the instruction in his power to the King's subjects, keeping them away, as far as he could, from all harmful extremes.'

"Whatever may be the importance of this testimony, it is not sufficient to prove that the first idea of the *Introduction to the Devout Life* was planted in the mind of its author by Henry IV. . . .

"Nor is it any more to be admitted that the relations of our Saint with Mme. de Charmoisy and the requests of Father Fourier that the counsels given to this chosen soul should be put within the reach of all, were the principal cause of the composition of the *Introduction to the Devout Life.* What St Francis de Sales says with regard to this subject in his Preface, and in a letter written in 1609 to the Archbishop of Vienne, is only the effect of his humble custom of attributing to the instigation of others any undertaking that might redound to his own praise. Nevertheless, these relations and these requests having doubtless exercised a very great and very direct influence with regard to the publication of this admirable book, it is suitable to make special mention in this connection of the chosen soul whom the Saint had particularly present to his mind when he composed the *Introduction.*"*

"Louise du Chastel† had, when still young, received the position of maid of honour in the entourage of Catherine of Cleves, Dowager Duchess of Guise. It was at Paris that she made the acquaintance of M. de Charmoisy, a gentleman of the court of the Duke of Nemours and a relative of St Francis de Sales. She married him in 1600 and followed him to Savoy, where she usually resided after that date, in spite of the frequent absences of M. de Charmoisy, who used to accompany his prince to the courts of Turin and Paris.

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* The compiler of this book cannot help thinking, in spite of his great admiration for Dom Mackey, that the learned Benedictine is inclined to under-estimate the part which Mme. de Charmoisy and Father Fourier took in the publication of the *Introduction.* It seems to him that Dom Mackey's dismissal of the Saint's own words in the Preface to the *Introduction* and in the letter to the Archbishop of Vienne is somewhat too arbitrary. These words relate what was an absolute matter of fact, and are not merely an example of the Saint's humility. This is borne out by Mme. de Charmoisy's own account, as related in the deposition of her son, Henri de Charmoisy, and by the well-known postscript in one of Father Fourier's letters to the Saint. Were it not for Mme. de Charmoisy and Father Fourier, the *Introduction* would probably never have been written. The Saint, we know, planned many works which his episcopal labours eventually prevented him from writing. Of course, the principal cause of a book is the author of a book. But it may surely be said that Mme. de Charmoisy and Father Fourier were the principal causes inducing St Francis to write the *Introduction.* If Mme. de Charmoisy had not religiously preserved the papers which she had received from the Saint, if Father Fourier had not, so to speak, placed them in a bundle under St Francis's eyes and shown him that the book was already practically written, and only needed putting together and amplifying, it is very doubtful whether the Saint, in the midst of his other work, would have set himself to write, as from an altogether fresh beginning, the book which has made his name so famous. It seems, therefore, that one can in a very true sense declare that Mme. de Charmoisy and Father Fourier were the principal causes which were responsible for the publication of the first edition of the *Introduction to the Devout Life.*

* Or Duchatel, as she spelt it herself.

"She was 'already a very virtuous soul'* when it pleased Providence to bring her into closer spiritual relations with the incomparable director whose 'dear cousin' she had become. Although young and gifted with all the advantages assured to her by rank and fortune, she did not hesitate to impose upon herself, in the midst of the world, a life which was in itself a condemnation of all the maxims of that world. Her docility and perseverance made her worthy of her saintly guide's devotion and solicitude, and the perfection which she reached was one of the most striking testimonies to the efficacy of the teachings given to Philothea. . . .

"As to the composing of this work, we have evidence from the author himself, for definite assertions are found in his correspondence to prove that the book was in process of formation from the season of Lent, 1607, and must have been completed during the summer of 1608.

"In the letter to the Archbishop of Vienne, already mentioned, the Saint speaks of the *Introduction* in these terms: 'It is a memorandum which I had composed for an excellent soul (*une belle ame*) who had asked for my guidance, and that amidst the occupations of Lent when I was preaching twice a week.' In all probability this was the Lent which the Saint preached at Annecy in 1607, and Mme. de Charmoisy would be the person to whom he was alluding in a letter addressed to Baroness de Chantal during 'the Holy time of the Passion' in that same year. 'I have just found in our sacred nets,' says the Prelate, 'a fish which I had desired to capture four years ago. To tell you the truth, I was very pleased at this—nay, delighted. She is a lady of golden worth,† and infinitely well fitted to serve her Saviour: and if she perseveres, she will do it with great fruit.' It is easy to explain the presence of Mme. de Charmoisy at Annecy. In the absence of her husband she had been obliged to carry on a lawsuit before the Senate of Chambéry, and one of the stages of this affair came to an end in February, 1607: one can very reasonably suppose that she then came on to Annecy in order to follow the Lenten exercises, preached by her illustrious relative, whose reputation for eloquence and holiness was increasing from day to day. This is proved by still another passage of the letter to the Archbishop of Vienne, in which the Saint, alluding to his book, says that he 'only composed the work for a soul whom he saw frequently.'‡

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* St Francis to the Archbishop of Vienne.

† "C'est une dame mais toute d'or," etc.

‡ It must be remembered that, while Mme. de Charmoisy only came under the Saint's guidance in 1607, they had probably been well acquainted with each other for several years. For M. de Charmoisy was not only a cousin, but a great friend of the Saint's.

"From this time henceforward there is frequent mention of Mme. de Charmoisy's name in the Saint's letters to Mme. de Chantal. Now there had never been any allusion to her in the letters written prior to the Lent of 1607. A letter to Mme. Brulart, dated June 8, 1606, supports our hypothesis. 'You again ask me, my dear sister,' says the Bishop, 'for a little memorandum on the virtues suitable to a married woman; but I have no time for such a thing: some day I will put down something in writing for you on the subject.' These words imply that, at the moment when they were written, the memorandum which was to guide Philothea on the path of the spiritual life was not yet in existence.

"Nevertheless, it is probable that Mme. de Charmoisy only received gradually the instructions destined to lead her to the Promised Land of true devotion. The testimony of the pious Philothea allows us to follow her in the stages of her journey heavenwards under the influence of her guide. We can see them proportioned to the needs of her soul, to the progress already made in the spiritual life, and to the means to be taken in order to accentuate and stabilize this progress. Thus it was that, first of all, she was introduced to mental prayer as the exercise suitable above all for the conception of serious resolutions towards embracing the devout life; speaking of this holy practice n her deposition as to the virtues of the saintly prelate, she said: 'He was very much devoted to it, and even gave me written instructions to help me to exercise it.'

"Later on other circumstances necessitated special counsels, with regard to which Mme. de Charmoisy's deposition supplies the following details: 'In the beginning, when I placed my soul in the hands of the said Servant of God, there came an occasion which necessitated my returning to the Court, and as I feared this greatly, I went to discuss the matter with the said Servant of God, telling him of my apprehensions. It was then that he said to me: *Courage, my daughter, do not be afraid that on this account you will lose ground: for, if you are faithful to God, he will never fail you, and even if he had to put back the sun and moon, he would give you sufficient time to perform your spiritual exercises and all the rest of your duties.* Thereupon he decided to give me written advice on this matter, which I communicated to a Jesuit father, who found them so excellent and useful that he begged the Blessed Servant of God to have them printed: and this was the occasion which gave rise to the composition of the *Introduction to the Devout Life*, in which book he included these writings.'

"As to the instructions on the annual renewal of good resolutions, it is natural to suppose that these were drawn up at the precise moment when they became useful. It was, as a matter of fact, on March 3, 1608, during his Lenten Station at Rumilly, that the Saint wrote to Mme. de Chantal in these terms: 'I am sending you an exercise which I have drawn up and prescribed for Mme. de Charmoisy, for I would not wish to do anything without your knowing it. I drew it up with the intention of making her renew her good resolutions, in which assuredly she has persevered with great constancy. She is an excellent soul, and admirable in her steadiness. She had never written to me about her soul until these last few days.' When the document thus announced was actually sent, he wrote again: 'I send you the exercise which I have drawn up for Mme. de Charmoisy during the Lenten season, for she was only at the feasts Monday and Tuesday; you will glance through it; only the last part will, in my opinion, be of any use to you. That lady is now at Chambéry on business; she has bound herself somewhat more closely to the crucifix and to complete dependence upon her Heavenly Father; not that her intention was ever any otherwise, but it was not so in such an open and declared manner.'"

Dom Mackey then devotes a paragraph to contesting certain features in the account given by Charles Auguste de Sales of the origin of the *Introduction*—mistakes drawn from unsupported assertions on the part of Mgr. Camus, the Bishop of Belley. He then continues: "It is, then, true to say that if the various ascetical teachings given by St Francis de Sales to the souls under his guidance were the ramifications of a finished system of spirituality, the book which resumes all these teachings was, even under its first form, a methodical work, enclosing within itself all the elements of its later completeness. Already did the idea of this perfection exist in the mind of the author, as one can easily understand on hearing him speak in this way to his reader: 'If this essay is pleasing to you, you shall see that which is yet wanting to it, as soon as my time allows me.'

"The very precise words of St Francis de Sales in his letter to the Archbishop of Vienne reveal in their true light the providential circumstances which occasioned the final putting together of the book of the *Introduction to the Devout Life*, and hastened the publication of that work. Speaking of his 'memorandum' and of her who possessed this precious writing, the author expresses himself in these terms: 'She [Mme. de Charmoisy] showed it to the Reverend Father Fourier, then Rector of the College of Chambéry, now of that of Avignon, whom she knew to be a great friend of mine, and to whom, indeed, I often rendered an account of my actions. It was he who urged me so strongly to publish this writing that, after having hastily reviewed it and having supplied it with several little adjustments,* I sent it to the printer.' It is interesting to compare these lines with those which Father Fourier addressed to our Saint on March 25, 1608: 'Monseigneur,' he said, 'how shall we manage to put under the

* *Quelques petitz ageancemens.*

press Mme. de Charmoisy's treasure of devotion? First of all, in my opinion, the whole thing must be revised, arranged in order, entitled and prefaced with the name of the author, in order that the book shall be the more guaranteed and universal: the whole to the glory of God. I will await, then, your commands upon the matter.' On July 4 in the same year St Francis de Sales wrote the following lines to Mme. Chantal: 'I have answered all your letters up to date, even though I have not much leisure at present. For, look you, during these great days they will not give me any rest, and I am dictating to our Thibaut the spiritual counsels of which I have spoken to you.' In spite of his want of leisure, the Saint was nevertheless able to put the last touch to his masterpiece and to finish it towards the end of the same month. The preface is dated August 8, 1608.

"With the exception of this preface, it would be difficult to indicate with any certitude the 'little adjustments' which the work received before being given to the public. The chapters on the general principles of devotion, and several others, not found in the manuscript of the first edition, are probably the only ones which have been added to it. . . .

"St Francis de Sales confided the publication of his work to Pierre Rigaud, one of the principal publishers of the city of Lyons, who must have received the manuscript in the month of August, 1608. But the printing was accomplished slowly. The title-page of this edition—the *Editio Princeps*—bears the date 1609.

"The *Introduction* met with immediate success and the sale of copies was rapid. The author, who had foreseen the probability of a speedy need for a second edition, soon found himself called upon to keep his promise and to supply what was still wanting to his work. His friend Mgr. Fenouillet, Bishop of Montpellier, reproached him for not having given 'enough body' to the volume, and consequently, during the first months of 1609, we find him at work. In order to render this task easier, he could not do better than have recourse to the treasures of instruction given to that other chosen soul which he had cultivated with even still greater care than Mme. de Charmoisy. Accordingly he wrote to Mme. de Chantal: 'Bring me all the letters and memoranda which I have ever sent you, if you still have them; because, if it be necessary to reprint the *Introduction*, these would assist me greatly, finding therein several things suitable for this matter; for as yet no one has criticized me with regard to the substance of the book, except that I have not been full enough. . . .'

"The character of the notable additions made to the second edition is explained to us by the Saint himself in a letter addressed, towards the end of 1609, to his friend Deshayes. 'I have added many little items, according to the desires which several reliable judges have expressed to me, and always having in my mind those people who live in the turmoil of the world.' He enriched it, as a matter of fact, with a certain number of chapters, amongst others one on *Humility*, enlarged and recast several others, especially those on *Chastity*, *Recreations*, and *Friendships*. On the other hand, in addition to three chapters left out by mischance, two others, those on *Forbidden Games* and on *Insults*, are not reproduced in the second edition; this last has not ever been reprinted in any authentic edition. The chapter *When One may Play and Dance* gives a sufficient account of the doctrine of St Francis de Sales on the subject of amusements: nevertheless, the chapter on *Forbidden Games* reappears in 1616 and onwards.

"The difference between the *Editio Princeps* and those which followed it is especially noticeable with regard to style and form. The author strives throughout to make his book more universal, and to take away from it all that relates in too exclusive a manner to the spiritual guidance of Mme. de Charmoisy. The two editions differ, moreover, in the number and arrangement of the parts. . . ."

It is not possible here to enter into a discussion of the various editions that followed. The description of these can be found in Dom Mackey's preface, from which we have just been quoting. In all, there were five editions brought out under the supervision of the Saint, the last of which, appearing in 1619, is the one reproduced in the Annecy edition of the *Oeuvres Complètes*.

We now pass on to give an analysis of this great work. "It is divided," says M. Hamon, "into five parts; in the first, the author begins by defining true devotion: 'It is,' he says, 'a facility of movement and quickness in the spiritual order, by means of which charity performs its actions in us, or we perform them through charity, promptly and affectionately. In so far as divine love adorns our soul, it is called grace; in so far as it gives us the strength to do well, it is called charity; but when it has arrived at that degree of perfection in which it not only makes us do well, but causes us to act attentively, frequently, and promptly, then it is called devotion.' In order to form within the soul the virtue of devotion thus understood, the author begins by describing the necessity and the manner of purifying the soul from all sin, from all affection for sin, from all evil inclinations, and from attachment to those things which are useless and dangerous: 'For,' he says, 'just as there is no disposition so good that it cannot be made bad by vicious habits, so there is no disposition so rebellious that it cannot, firstly by the grace of God, and then by industry and diligence, be tamed and overcome.'

"The ground thus cleared of all that is evil, the author, wishing to build thereon the home of virtues, passes to the means of construction, that is to say, to spiritual exercises, and these are the subjects of the second part. Therein he deals with meditation, examination of conscience, recollection, ejaculatory prayer or aspirations of the heart towards God, assistance at Holy Mass, invocation of the saints, the word of God, confession and communion."*

Two of these different items were especially insisted upon in the Saint's system—frequent acts of recollection, which he called spiritual retreats, and the offering up from time to time of short prayers of ejaculation and desire. "As often as you can during the day, call your mind back into the presence of God. . . . Consider what God is doing and what you are doing: you will see his eyes turned towards you and ever fixed upon you in a love without compare." In just the same way that many creatures have a place of peace and safety, to which they can withdraw at need, so ought we to have a place of retreat in our hearts or minds to which the soul can retire. "Our hearts must choose and take some place each day, either on Mount Calvary, or in the wounds of our Saviour, or in some other place nigh to him, there to withdraw on all sorts of occasions, to find relief and recreation in the midst of external affairs, and to place ourselves therein as in a fortress where we may protect ourselves from temptation. . . . Remember, therefore, Philothea, always to make several retreats in the solitude of your heart, whilst bodily you are in the midst of conversations and affairs; and this mental solitude can in no way be hindered by the number of those who are around you; for they are not around your heart but merely around your body, so that your heart remains itself all alone in the presence of God alone."

The second thing recommended, and one connected with this, is the use of short, ejaculatory prayers, uttered within the mind. St Francis says: "Very often, then, Philothea, make acts of desire towards God by short but ardent movements of your heart. Admire his beauty, invoke his aid, cast yourself in spirit at the foot of the Cross, adore his goodness, interrogate him often about your salvation, fix the eyes of your soul upon his sweetness, stretch out your hand to him, like a child to its father, place him upon your breast like a bouquet of fair flowers, plant him in your heart like a standard, and in numberless and divers ways urge on your heart to obtain the love of God and to arouse within you a passionate and tender longing for this divine Spouse."†

St Francis insists that both this exercise and that of the Spiritual Retreat are not difficult, and that they can be performed in the midst of all our occupations without upsetting these, for the simple reason that they are short in duration. How important were these exercises in his scheme of asceticism can be seen from what he says in concluding this part of the *Introduction.*

"Now, in this exercise of the Spiritual Retreat and of ejaculatory prayer lies the great work of devotion. It can supply the want of all other prayers, but the lack thereof can scarcely be made good by any other means. Without it one cannot effectively carry on the contemplative life, and the active life itself can only be a failure; without it, repose is but idleness, and work a useless entanglement. That is why I conjure you to embrace it with all your heart and never to give it up."*

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* Hamon, vol. i, p. 629.

† Chap. xiv, *Introduction.*

The second part of the book ends with the chapter on Holy Communion. "After these two parts, which are, so to speak, preliminary instructions, the author," said M. Hamon, "comes, in the third part, to the practice of the virtues: and it is here that, after having explained, in two chapters, the choice that must be made of a particular virtue, in order to pursue its attainment until it is fully possessed, he treats with a clearness and elegance in no way detracting from precision and force, of patience, humility, and gentleness, obedience, chastity, the spirit of detachment, bodily mortification, and propriety as to dress; of commendable conversations, of which God is the subject or which at any rate deal with suitable topics, and of reprehensible conversations leading to backbiting and rash judgement; of recreations which are allowed and of those which are dangerous, such as the theatre and dances; and he finishes this third part with considerations on fidelity to God on small as well as great occasions, on the duty of acting, speaking, and thinking as a truly rational individual should, and finally on the obligations of married people, widows, and maidens."

It is fitting at this point to give something of St Francis's teaching as to the attitude of a devout Christian towards such things as dances, plays, and other similar worldly amusements. It was here that his treatment differed from that of the majority of the spiritual directors in his day. These men taught that it was practically impossible to indulge at all in these amusements and at the same time lead a devout life. Some, indeed, went further and maintained that to be present at balls and theatres was to incur the guilt of placing oneself in a proximate and dangerous occasion of sin. "St Francis," says Dom Mackey, "taught that, although these things were dangerous, they might still be done without compromising devotion, if the proper precautions were taken. The evil lies, as in the case of venial sin, not in the act, but in the affection. 'The heart which loads itself with such useless, superfluous, and dangerous affections cannot possibly run after God.' But 'perfection does not lie in not seeing, but in not loving the world.'† When the real danger has been pointed out, he is most emphatic in his warning. Far from being the 'advocate of balls,' he is their determined enemy, as may be seen in the thirty-third chapter of Part III of the *Introduction.* Still he is human. He allows for social necessity. While no encouragement for license could legitimately be drawn from his teaching, he made it possible for the devout matron or maiden to join in these forms of pleasure necessarily connected with their state of life without injuring their duty to God. At the same time he exacted a greater sacrifice. It is harder to do such things with detachment of heart than to avoid them altogether. He forbade it as a pleasure while he allowed it as a duty."* This is a severe enough doctrine, and many, if not most, pious people of to-day would find it difficult to follow.

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* *Ibid.*

† Letters to Persons in the World.

"After having thus treated of the virtues," continues M. Hamon, "the author consecrates the fourth part of his work to fortifying the soul against the trials likely to be experienced in the new life to which he has introduced it; here he treats of the more ordinary temptations and their remedies, of human respect, of unrest, of sadness, of spiritual aridity and tedium.

"Finally, as man easily forgets even those things which have touched him once most deeply, and falls into the carelessness of routine, the author devotes a fifth and last part to the annual renewal of good resolutions by means of serious examination of conscience and by profound considerations on the excellence of the soul, the value of virtue, the examples of the saints, the love of God and of his son, Jesus Christ, for mankind; and he ends his work by giving a number of counsels such as are likely to strengthen the soul in the practice of virtue."

There are two matters in connection with the teaching of the *Introduction to the Devout Life*, on which a word of warning might be given to modern readers of this wonderful book. His instructions on Holy Communion were suited to the people for whom he wrote, and in recommending to his penitents a frequent reception of the Blessed Sacrament, he went further than most of his contemporaries. But it is quite evident that in these days his teaching on this point must be superseded by the legislation and exhortations of Pius X. And we may be quite sure that nobody would have received the doctrine of this saintly Pope with more docility, joy, and thanksgiving than St Francis de Sales.

Another matter that necessitates a word of warning, made needful by differences of outlook between one age and another, is the Saint's treatment of the delicate subject of the duties of married people towards each other. Dom Mackey, in his preface to the *Introduction*, writes as follows: "Certain Protestant moralists reproach him severely with having broached certain subjects of a delicate nature, in a work destined to be placed in the hands of all and sundry, and with having used certain expressions and comparisons, unbecoming, according to their opinion, the pen of a religious writer. The authors of such accusations are evidently but little familiar with the literature and customs of the period. They are ignorant of the fact that a greater broadness of ideas permitted this simplicity of language, so shocking to the affectation of modesty, under cover of which our modern society vainly seeks to hide its profound corruption. Several witnesses at the process of canonization, on the question of the Prelate's prudence, positively affirm that in his books there is not found a single page capable of wounding the severest modesty." This declaration reflects most certainly the opinion of the Saint's contemporaries, for whom his works were written and who must certainly be admitted to be the judges best qualified to express a decision upon the matter.

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* Four Essays (reprinted from *Dublin Review*), iii, B. and O.

From the very moment of its publication the book proved a phenomenal success. It was soon translated into almost all the languages of Europe, and editions appeared in such rapid succession that in 1656 their numbers had already reached two score. Henry IV, after reading it carefully, proclaimed that the *Introduction* far surpassed his expectations. The General of the Feuillants called it the most perfect book that had ever been composed by mortal hand, a book that one wished to read again after having read it several times; and he added further praise by saying that, on reading it, he who was not a Christian would become one, he who was already a Christian would be made better, and he who had been made better would become perfect. St Jane Frances de Chantal described the book as one which the Spirit of God alone had inspired. St Vincent de Paul prescribed in the first rules for his Confraternities of Charity that a chapter of the book should be read every day. The General of the Carthusian monks was so struck by the book that he advised the author never to write again, because, having achieved in this work the highest perfection, he could thereafter produce nothing but what would be inferior and would only lessen his renown. Several friends spoke to him in like vein. The Saint, however, while fully appreciating the affection of such zealous partisans, was by no means inclined to accept a policy that was so totally opposed to the true Christian spirit. "You see," he said to a friend, "these good people are fond of me, and it is their love for me that makes them speak in this manner, and they do so from the abundance of their hearts. But, if they would only turn their eyes away a little from me, who am a wretched and insignificant man, and would fix them upon God, they would sing in a different key. For if God has deigned to bless this little book, why should he not grant his blessing to a second work? And if from this first he has drawn glory to himself, as formerly he brought light from the midst of darkness and the sacred fire from the midst of mud, is his arm shortened and his power less? Can he not still draw clear and refreshing water from the jawbone of an ass? But these good folk are not thinking of that, but of my personal glory, as if we ought to desire such for ourselves and not refer it all to the name of God who works within us all the good that we do. Now, according to the spirit of the Gospel, we ought to be so far from paying attention to the applause of the world, as to realize the truth of St Paul's words, that the praise of men is a poor mark of a servant of God. . . . For this reason, therefore, if this little book has gained for me some sort of empty renown, I ought to build another of less worth to dissipate this incense, and to gain that blessed contempt from mankind which makes us all the more agreeable to God. . . ."*

The aged Archbishop of Vienne, Pierre de Villars, looked upon the Saint's success in a more fitting light. In a complimentary letter to St Francis he urged him strongly to write again, because he had already written so well. After expressing the delight which the reading of so excellent a book had given to him, the Archbishop added that the work was a signal service done to religion and to souls; that by striving to turn the wills of men from their passions, Francis was attacking heresy at the root; and that so perfect a treatise on true piety was no less useful to the cause of the faith than the works of the most learned controversialists.

Nor were Catholics the only ones to appreciate the *Introduction to the Devout Life.* Several witnesses testified that it found its way even into Geneva, and that many Calvinists in that city held it in high esteem. It is a matter of history that Catherine de' Medici sent a copy, beautifully bound, with a decoration of diamonds and precious stones, to James I of England, and that this monarch, in spite of his prejudices against Catholicity, conceived so great an admiration for the book that he always took it with him and read it frequently. We are told that he was heard to exclaim: "I would dearly love to know the author of this work: he is certainly a great man. Amongst all our bishops there is not one who is capable of writing in this way." Later on, during the reign of his son, the book became so popular that Charles I, accused of a leaning towards Catholicism and wishing to rebut this reproach, ordered that all the copies of the *Introduction* circulating in his kingdom should be seized and burnt—and this in spite of the fact that the translation had been approved by Laud, Archbishop of Canterbury. Sixty years later, however, the book was once more in the hands of Anglicans, in spite of this proscription.

It is recorded, however, that there was at least one person who refused to add his voice to the chorus of praise in celebration of the *Introduction.* In the city of Avignon a member of a very austere Order attacked the book in the pulpit. He condemned its doctrine as a cowardly and wicked pandering to sinners, and as a vital alteration of the truth, in favour of passion and at the expense of the Gospel. The preacher made a particular assault upon Francis's teaching as to balls and his toleration of so-called idle jests in conversation: he seemed particularly incensed at the word *quolibet* which the Saint had used for the latter. Not content with condemning the book, the fervid orator attacked the character of the author; he averred that the gentle, edifying, and modest bearing of Francis de Sales was naught but the outer semblance of virtue, that the Gospel teaches us to judge a tree by its fruits, and that, according to this rule, the writer was only a whitened sepulchre hiding beneath false externals the rottenness within. Finally, as if to give a visible representation of the holy zeal that inspired him, the preacher held up before the congregation a copy of the book which was thus stirring his bile, and then tore it into fragments, branding its author as a true successor of Calvin, a corrupted and corrupting doctor.* When the news of this public affront reached the ears of the Saint, he maintained his customary calm and took no notice of the matter. The answer which he eventually made to the charges of the accuser is found in his preface to the *Treatise on the Love of God*. After mentioning the two matters of which this critic and others had made complaint, he says: "As for me, knowing the quality of these censors, I commend their intention which I believe to have been good; but, nevertheless, I could have wished it had pleased them to consider that the first proposition is drawn from the common and true doctrine of the most saintly and learned theologians, that I was writing for people living in the world and at the court, and that, this being understood, I carefully inculcated the extreme danger of dances; and that, as to the second, with regard to the word *quolibet*, it is not mine, but is taken from the admirable St Louis, a doctor worthy of being followed when there is question of the art of guiding courtiers safely towards the devout life. For I believe that, if they had taken this precaution, their charity and discretion would never have allowed their zeal, however rigorous and austere it might have been, to have armed their indignation against me."

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* *Esprit,* Part XVI, Sect. 22.

The *Introduction to the Devout Life* continued to gain for itself renewed praise in every class of the Christian commonwealth, and after the passage of three centuries its success remains as incontestible as ever. It can only be of the greatest interest to the Catholics of England to recall the words of Cardinal Wiseman, written during the century that has just elapsed: "He could not make the narrow road a wide one—God forbid! But how many unnecessary briars has he not plucked out of it, how many a heavy stone has he not rolled aside from before our feet, how many a yawning chasm has he not bridged over for our secure passage, how many a dark nook and gloomy turn has he not lighted up by his cheerful torch! Has he not made meditation more easy, prayer more confident, confession less painful, communion more refreshing, scruples less annoying, temptations less formidable, the world less dangerous, the love of God more practicable, and virtue more amiable?"*

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* Charles Auguste de Sales (l. vii, p. 34 of vol. ii) speaks very vigorously of this preacher, alluding to him as "un certain masque (le nom duquel est en horreur à l'histoire)"; he brands the critic's imprudence as being worthy of the whip; and finally adds—"Ce brave censeur n'estoit pas des plus profonds theologiens du monde."

The final testimony which we shall quote in favour of the *Introduction to the Devout Life*, or *Philothea*, as it was once called, is taken from the Brief *Dives in misericordia Dei*, in which Pius IX decrees to St Francis de Sales the title of Doctor of the Church. The Holy Father describes how, in a book called *Philothea*, the Saint has depicted with a master's hand the beauty of virtue, and "making the crooked paths straight and the rough ways plain, had shown that the way to devotion was so accessible for all Christians, that thereafter piety shed its light in every place, in the palaces of kings, in the tents of warriors, in the courts of law, in the homes of business and of manufacture, and even in the humble hamlets of shepherds."

Encouraged by the success of the *Introduction*, Francis resolved to devote time and strength to the production of several other books. The first of these was to be a work upon the Love of God, written with the purpose of drawing the faithful into closer union with their Creator: the second was to be a treatise on preaching, the method of which was to be so designed that, while its primary object was to be the conversion of Protestants, it would at the same time be instructive and edifying to those of the household of the faith. He also intended to compose for the use of pious souls a calendar, in which spiritual occupations and exercises, suitable for each month of the year, would be recommended and described. Francis communicated his plans to the Archbishop of Vienne, who approved their conception and encouraged their execution, foreseeing that the accomplishment of these projects would be greatly to the glory of God and the benefit of souls.

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* Preface to *The Conferences*, as quoted in Dom Mackey's Four Essays.

CHAPTER XXIV*
(1609–1610)

Lenten Station at Annecy—Synod—Reformation of Abbey of Talloires—Francis consecrates Jean Pierre Camus—Character of this prelate—His reliability as a biographer—Francis passes through Geneva on the way to Gex—Visit to Franche Comté—Preaches at Dole—Besançon—At Baume-les-Dames he adjudicates the dispute about Salines—Invitation to preach at Salines negatived by Archbishop of Besançon—Francis is accused of treason to the Duke—The Saint's answer—Death of Mme. de Boisy—Mme. de Chantal arrives at Annecy—Synod—Assassination of Henry IV—Death of Canon Déage—Antoine Favre leaves Annecy—He gives his house to the Bishop—Francis and the Bishop of Belley

TWO or three weeks after the publication of the *Introduction*, the Saint began the preaching of the Lenten Station at the church of the Dominicans of Annecy. This was in the early days of March. Mme. de Chantal, with her two daughters, Marie-Aimée and Françoise, had recently come to Annecy, and she attended all the functions and exercises of this Lent under the Bishop's guidance.

It was during these weeks that occurred an incident which cast a gloom over the family at Sales and particularly saddened the Bishop. This was the death, on March 29, of Claude-Philiberte de Pingon, the wife of Louis de Sales. The deep grief of his favourite brother, the tears of the whole family, and the blow inflicted upon his friend, Baron de Cusy, by the premature death of a beloved daughter—all added to the sorrow which Francis himself experienced at the death of an esteemed friend, whose sterling merits had gained his admiration. This death was the more lamentable on account of the loss which it inflicted upon the only child of Louis de Sales, Charles Auguste, who was afterwards to succeed his uncle in the bishopric of Geneva and to become the Saint's most reliable biographer.

After the feasts of Easter the Bishop presided over the diocesan synod on May 6, and then, in June, made his way to Talloires, which lay at a distance of two leagues from Annecy. At this place there existed an abbey of the Order of St Benedict, situated on the banks of the lake of Annecy in the midst of delightful scenery. For many centuries it had worthily fulfilled its destiny and had been the home of a long succession of saintly monks. But, owing to the troubled state of the times, it had lately fallen away from its ancient traditions, and was at this time inhabited by a handful of religious, who, with a few exceptions, lived without rule, discipline, or piety. In the midst of the religious revival that was then taking place, this was inevitably a matter of great scandal. It is not averred, as far as we can see, that the inmates were guilty of any great abuses, though some of them showed themselves in the sequel to be passionate and unruly to the extent of planning a murder: but the Christian community looks to its monks for the highest examples of holiness, expecting to see them in the vanguard of reform. Unfortunately, the monks of Talloires had no intention of fulfilling the demands of their lofty vocation. Francis, deeply grieved at this state of affairs, reported the matter to Rome, and Paul V, in an answer to his report, gave him full powers to make a visitation of the monastery with the object of securing its reform.

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* Hamon, l. iv, chap. ix.

This authority was, of course, sufficient for immediate action. Anxious, however, to avoid giving unnecessary offence, the Bishop also laid the matter before the Abbot of Savigny, of whose monastery the Abbey of Talloires was a dependence: and having been successful in obtaining this prelate's approval and delegation, he set out for Talloires on June 25. On his arrival at the monastery, he introduced himself to the monks as the vicar and delegate of their Abbot, commissioned by the latter to make a visitation of their house. Having assembled the religious in the chapter-house, he told them that it was in the interests of religion and of their own souls that he had come amongst them. He represented to them that, being monks, their sole hope of salvation was to observe their vows or to obtain a dispensation therefrom; that, with very few exceptions, the Holy See had always held to the policy of refusing such dispensations; and that, consequently, their only good course was to resume once more the proper observance of the vows which they had taken. So eloquent and persuasive were his words that some of the monks were moved to tears, and immediately expressed their willingness to engage upon a reformation. It was not so with all, however. Several protested strongly against the proposed reform, declaring that they wanted no innovations, that, on entering the monastery, they had only engaged themselves to the life which was then being led therein, and that they would refuse to submit to any other yoke. In vain did the Saint strive to make them accept his views: they remained unshaken. Consequently, he left them to themselves, and called a separate gathering of those who had given in their submission: these he directed to elect a prior, and their choice, to the Bishop's delight, fell upon Claude Nicolas de Quoex, a devout religious, who had for a long time desired the reform of Talloires. Francis then gave to the new prior the rule of life which he wished to see carried on in the monastery, and deeming it unwise to push matters further at that time, returned to Annecy, after having heard the monks' confessions and set them upon their new life.

As soon as the Bishop had departed, however, the malcontents raised such a sedition amongst the other religious that the newly-elected prior was obliged to fly from the monastery and take refuge in a neighbouring house. The events that followed were so amazing as to be almost beyond belief. Three of the monks, having worked themselves up to a pitch of fury and thinking to put an end to reform by getting rid of the prior, waylaid him one day, and tried to murder him with pistols. All three had provided themselves with weapons, and all three attempted to shoot their intended victim, but, either because they were very bad marksmen indeed, or because the pistols of those days were somewhat uncertain in their action, they failed to accomplish their purpose, and the good prior escaped with nothing worse than the shock of finding himself the object of such murderous proceedings. His assailants, having failed, quickly came to their senses, and realizing that they had made themselves liable to the severe vengeance of the civil law, sought out the prior once more, and begged him to forgive them. They ingenuously suggested that they were not so much afraid of the Bishop, whose well-known mercy was equal to pardoning even such a crime as theirs, but they had no such confidence in the meekness of the Senate of Savoy, and they implored the prior not to take action against them before the civil power. Then, without letting the grass grow under their feet, these remarkable people hastened off to Annecy, to throw themselves on the compassion of the Bishop. The latter was unable to steel himself against their tears and protestations, and ended by granting them forgiveness, insisting, however, that unless they immediately altered the tenor of their lives, they would certainly be exposed to all the severity which they had deserved. When, later on, Father de Quoex came to Annecy, to give his version of this affair, the Bishop not only advised him not to report the culprits to the Senate, but begged him to pardon them fully and to show them no further sign of resentment. The prior, being a saint himself, was equal to adopting this heroic policy, and did it so thoroughly that the Bishop felt constrained to utter a word of warning. He cautioned the prior to exercise every vigilance, and not to expose himself to danger. "For," said Francis, "it is not right to go and seek out martyrdom in the midst of our foes."

Some days after this occurrence the Bishop, at the request of Father de Quoex, sent him a letter, containing advice as to the direction of his community. The prior was to act with prudence, patience, and humility. At the very beginning of things he was not to expect that everybody be perfect, but must learn to wait and to endure.

He must try to train his subjects gradually to bear themselves in all things as became religious, must instruct them in the practice of prayer, meditation, examination of conscience, weekly communion, and obedience. The Bishop also gave the prior a number of practical suggestions as to the religious habit, the disposition of the dormitories, the rules for fasting and abstinence, the conditions under which the monks should take their walks outside the monastery, whether for business or recreation. He ended by giving Father de Quoex a final exhortation on the need of gentleness and tact.*

In the meanwhile the Saint, deciding to complete his measures for the reformation of the Abbey without delay, applied for the intervention of the Senate and the support of the secular power in carrying out the faculties he had received from the Holy See and from the Abbot of Savigny. Then, accompanied by one of the members of the Senate, he went to Talloires, and summoned the monks either to submit to the proposed reformation or to leave the monastery. This was on October 25, 1610. Several preferred the latter alternative, alleging that it was impossible for them to lead a life so different to that which they had known hitherto: accordingly they were allowed to depart, after being assured by the Bishop that they would receive a modest pension sufficient for their daily needs. He then bestowed the kiss of peace upon those who had determined to undertake the reformed life of the monastery, encouraged them by fervent exhortations to persevere courageously in their good resolutions, and, after visiting the whole of the abbey and its precincts, departed from Talloires with every hope in his breast that the ancient piety would soon be revived within its walls.

The Bishop's hopes were certainly fulfilled for a time. Discipline flourished once more within the walls of Talloires, and the lives of the monks gave great edification to the people of the neighbourhood. So zealous were they in their reformation, that the Saint used to say to them that they had more need of the bridle than of the spur. "You are doing too much," he told them. "You must form amongst yourselves a life that will last. Now, that which is violent is never durable. You must hasten slowly, and must not hurry on with inconsiderate fervour." The wisdom of the Saint's advice received verification after his death and his fears were realized. Once more the spirit of relaxation made its way into the monastery and was the cause of much anxiety to his successors.†

It was during the year 1609 that Francis de Sales made the acquaintance of Jean Pierre Camus. The virtue and genius of this young ecclesiastic had already attracted the attention of the people of Paris, and he was in considerable demand as a preacher. Henry IV, who was always seeking out men of virtue and learning for the bishoprics of France, eventually nominated M. Camus to the see of Belley, which had been vacant for some time. The Bishop-elect was still two years short of the twenty-seven, agreed to in the concordat between Leo X and Francis I as being the minimum age required in a candidate for the episcopacy: but the Holy See, on receiving the most favourable testimonials as to the qualifications of Camus from several cardinals and other influential people, granted the necessary dispensation. As soon as this matter was settled, Mgr. Camus wrote to Francis de Sales and begged him to undertake the duties of consecrating prelate in the cathedral of Belley. Francis accepted the invitation, and officiated at the consecration on August 30, 1609. The Saint was not long in perceiving that the new Bishop was possessed of piety, zeal, talent, and learning, and, in addition to these qualities, a warmth of heart and a tactful courtesy of manner such as were deeply attractive to his own disposition. Mgr. Camus, on the other hand, rejoiced to find in his immediate neighbourhood a prelate who was ready to bestow upon him a sympathetic friendship and a manifestly wise guidance in the trials of his new life. From the very first, therefore, there existed between the two Bishops the most cordial understanding, which was eventually transformed into those more intimate relations existing between father and son.

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* E.N., Tom. XIV, Lettre DXXXVIII, p. 172.

† A full and interesting account of these incidents is found in C. A. de S., l. vii, p. 41 of vol. ii.

It is difficult to form a just estimate of the character of Jean Pierre Camus. An ardent lover of God, intensely spiritual, at heart unambitious, fearing no man, tenderly charitable to the poor, severe towards himself, irreproachable in his private life, his career was nevertheless spoilt by impetuosity and want of balance. So long as Francis de Sales lived, he found in the Saint's guidance a means of avoiding extremes, but when deprived of his friend's wise counsel, it seemed impossible for him to exercise moderation in the use of his undoubted gifts. In a moment of discouragement he resigned his bishopric of Belley, and devoted himself to writing. With the most amazing facility he turned out hundreds of books, from treatises on devotion and controversy to works of the most imaginative fiction. That he should have composed some fifty novels will not strike the people of these days as being necessarily reprehensible—especially as his object was of the highest: but in his campaign against the religious Orders, it cannot be denied that he went beyond all bounds, even when we grant that the conduct of many monks and friars in those times gave serious cause for reproach and afforded grave scandal within and without the Church. We could not have a more convincing proof of his excess in this matter than the wonderful letter written to him by St Jane Frances de Chantal in 1632, in which she implores him to put an end to his campaign.*

What, however, concerns us mostly here, is his worth as a biographer in his famous book, *The Spirit of the Blessed Francis de Sales*, which so many of the Saint's historians quote as their authority for their account of certain of his actions and words. Speaking on this point, M. Hamon says: "Certain hypercritical minds (*Des esprits chagrins*) have striven to make out that his book of *The Spirit of St Francis de Sales* had not a real historical value: their attempts, however, have proved vain. That marvellous work is stamped indeed with the seal of its author, who possessed such a brilliant and productive mind: but he none the less presents to us truly the mind, the manner, and the speech of the Bishop of Geneva."

This, however, is not the testimony of a later authority—the editor of the fourteenth volume of the Œuvres Complètes.† In a note attached to Letter DXIX, after mentioning Collet's résumé of the *Esprit*, published in two volumes, he says:

"It is this résumé which has popularized amongst the public the name of Jean Pierre Camus, and it is these extracts, doubtless, which have made more than one man of letters desire to read the work in its fulness. Well—there is this to be said, in order to finish with a legend: the author, in this respect, does not deserve so much sympathy and confidence, especially on the part of the historians who quote him so complacently. After the conscientious work of the Abbé de Baudry: *The True Spirit of St Francis de Sales* (Lyons, 1846) the Bishop of Belley can no longer be regarded as the faithful interpreter of the Saint's doctrine and the exact portraitist of his soul. On several notable points he makes a travesty of the thoughts of the Saint by attributing to the latter opinions of his own; and this is in no way astonishing in a writer who prides himself in many of his prefaces on the fact that he never re-read or crossed out anything which he had written, and who was quoting from memory, seventeen years after the death of St Francis, the remarks which he puts in the Saint's mouth. And truly it cannot be said that in the pages of this crude compilation—interspersed though they be with many agreeable anecdotes—we are given a truly living picture of the noble, judicious, and consistent soul of the great Bishop."‡

It is difficult to decide between two such authorities as these, but we are disposed to think that the verdict of modern judges would incline rather to the second opinion than the first.

Scarcely had Francis returned to Annecy than he received an order from Henry IV to go to Gex for the purpose of a conference with Baron de Lux on the re-establishment of Catholicism in that country. The Bishop immediately set out upon his journey, accompanied by the unusually large retinue of a dozen people. When they reached the banks of the Rhône, which they had to cross on their way, they found the river in such a dangerous state of flood that the boatmen would not risk the crossing. The only alternative route was to pass through the city of Geneva, and this was a very risky proceeding. It does not seem likely that there was any serious danger of death for Francis, in his venturing into the Calvinistic capital, but there was a very real chance of his being arrested and imprisoned for a time or of his suffering some violence at the hands of a fanatical mob. After all, Francis was passing through the country at the command of Henry IV, and he was known to be a personal favourite of that monarch: it was not likely that the Genevan Government would do anything to vex the French king, who, in spite of his having gone to Mass, was still loyal to his former alliance with them and whose favour it was always their policy to cultivate. Nevertheless, that there was a considerable danger of some sort is evident from the whole history of the affair and its sequel. Accordingly we are not surprised to find that the Bishop's companions protested vigorously when he proposed to pass through Geneva, and a considerable discussion ensued. Francis, on the other hand, represented that his conference with Baron de Lux was assigned for a certain date, and that, if the appointment were not kept, the work of restoring the Catholic religion in the country of Gex might receive a serious check. Ultimately the Saint decided to put the matter before God in prayer, and he made his way to St Julien, not far from Geneva, in order to offer up the Holy Sacrifice as the best means of obtaining the guidance of the Holy Spirit. "Our citizens of Geneva," he said with a smile, "do not want to hear Mass; so we will take them one already said." After the consecration Francis, having stopped for a few moments in silence, with his eyes fixed upon the Blessed Sacrament, felt himself impelled to a sudden resolution, while at the same time his companions were affected with a similar influence: no sooner was the Mass finished than it was unanimously decided that their only course was to continue their journey at once, and to do so by passing through the city. "Let us go in the safe keeping of God," said Francis. "He will dispose of us as he sees good." "At any rate," suggested some of his companions, "it would be wiser to disguise yourself and to make the journey *incognito*." "No," he answered, "we must not be ashamed to wear the livery of Jesus Christ, and the shepherd who goes to seek his sheep ought not to conceal himself from them." "But how shall we describe you to the watch at the city gates, who demands the names of those who propose to enter within the walls?" "Well," he replied, "you will say that I am the Bishop of the diocese."* What actually happened at the gates is described by St Francis himself in a letter to Father Possevin. "On our arriving at the gate, the superintendent demanded to know who I was. I made answer through my Vicar-General that I was the Bishop. On being asked, 'What bishop?' I told them to say, 'The Bishop of this diocese.' The man then wrote in his register: 'Mr. Francis de Sales, bishop of this diocese.' I do not know whether he understood the word *diocese*: at any rate, he allowed me to enter, and thus I rode through the town, saluted by most of the men and women with great respect." The adventure was not quite finished, however. It was the custom at certain times, when service was being held in church, to close the gates of the city, for Genevans lived under a rigorous religious discipline, and it so happened that by the time the episcopal cavalcade had reached the other side of the city, the gates were shut and egress barred. There was nothing to be done but to make their way to an inn—at the sign of the White Cross—and there patiently await the cessation of Calvinistic eloquence. Eventually the gates were opened, and the Bishop with his companions arrived safely at Gex on September 12. As to the effect of this incident on the Genevans, when once they had realized that the "papistic" prelate, who claimed to be Bishop and Prince of Geneva, had actually been within their walls, there are several accounts. It is probable that the Saint's own version, given in the letter already quoted, is the most reliable.

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* Appendix II, vol. xiv, Œuvres Complètes, E.N.

† The preface of this volume is signed, as editor, by Fr. J. J. Navatel, S.J.

‡ E.N., Note to Lettre DXIX, Tom. XIV, p. 139.

"Afterwards, when the rumour of my passage through the town spread amongst the citizens, there were considerable differences of opinion with regard to it. The wild element asserted that I ought to have been detained in order to force me to surrender my rank;† the better kind of folk contended that I ought to have been detained in order that I might be shown every courtesy as a friendly nobleman of the neighbourhood. But in general they regarded as a bad omen the fact that I had calmly passed amongst them wearing the marks of my episcopal rank and saying at their gate that I was their Bishop. Never, indeed, had such a thing happened since the days of their revolt."‡ It was only to be expected that amongst the more violent and fanatical of the Calvinists there should be a good deal of heated comment. It is said that in the register in which the Bishop's name had been inscribed were written the words "Just let him come back!" and a number of threats were uttered against the Saint, even to the extent of suggesting his execution on the Place du Moulard, where he had once held a public controversy with their ministers. When the rumour of this threat was brought to the Bishop, he said: "Alas! I would be willing enough, if I could thus gain their conversion. But since my life is of no avail to them, what would they gain by my death?"*

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* Dep. de F. Favre. Hamon says that this deponent gave the answers to the guard: but the Saint says in a letter that it was his Vicar-General, Jean Favre. *Vide* Lettre DLIX and note, p. 223.

† An allusion to his right to the title of Prince of Geneva.

‡ E.N., Tom. XIV, Lettre DLIX, p. 223.

When Baron de Lux learnt of this incident, he expressed his amazement that the Bishop should have ventured to run such a risk. "Were you not afraid," he asked the Saint, "of falling into the hands of these traitors? If they had done you the slightest harm, they would have brought ruin upon themselves: but it would have been brought upon us also." "Why, what could they have done to me?" replied Francis, with his usual calmness and good humour. "Kill me? What good would that have done them? Kept me a prisoner in order to force from me concessions to the detriment of the Catholic religion? Never would they have succeeded in obtaining from me the surrender of a single one of the rights of the Church! I placed my confidence in God, for whose glory I took the risk, and he delivered me out of their hands."† This was not the last of the affair, however: Francis was destined to hear more of it in the sequel from a very unexpected quarter.

The outcome of the Bishop's dealings with Baron de Lux was in the main successful. Five years previously four parishes, Cessy, Péron, Challex, and Versonnex, had applied to the French authorities for leave to have the ancient religion restored in their midst. It was not, however, until February, 1609, that their request was granted, along with an injunction that the churches and cemeteries should be restored to the Catholics. It was to arrange the details of these transactions that Francis had journeyed to Gex. With regard to the parish of Challex the Genevans put up a stiff fight, sending their magistrates to Baron de Lux on two occasions, in order to put forward their side of the case, and for the moment they achieved their object. It was not until two years later that the Duke of Bellegarde handed Challex over to the Catholics.‡ During this visit to Gex Francis converted many of the Calvinists by his sermons and conferences: he also wrote to the ministers of Geneva to say that he was quite willing to return to their city, if they would agree to hold a public disputation on religion, but they turned his challenge aside with excuses similar to those employed on former occasions. These labours and anxieties proved too much for the Saint's health, and he was again afflicted with one of those slow fevers to which he seemed very susceptible. Nevertheless he refused to lie up, and continued to work with heroic zeal, until his mission in the country was accomplished.

His next destination was Franche-Comté, to which he had to go as

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* Hamon quotes dep. of Mère de Chaugy.

† C. A. de S., l. vii, p. 50 of vol ii.

‡ Noie to Lettre DXLVII.

Commissary of the Holy See, to settle a lawsuit between the King of Spain and the clergy of Burgundy with regard to the waters of Salines, from which salt was manufactured. First of all, however, he found himself obliged to go to Monthelon, near Autun, in order to bless the marriage of his brother Bernard with the eldest daughter of Mme. de Chantal on October 13. He then made his way to the town of Dôle, which he entered at nightfall on the eve of All Saints. As soon as the Syndics of the place heard of his arrival, they hastened to welcome him, and, after the exchange of the usual compliments, begged him to preach the next day in honour of the festival. Next morning he celebrated Mass in the Jesuit church at eight o'clock, giving Holy Communion to more than 800 people. The ceremony was so long that he had very little time to break his fast and secure a few moments of recollection before going up into the pulpit at one o'clock in the parish church. Here he preached on the difficult subject of predestination, one of the great points of controversy between the two religions, and he treated his subject with such clearness and eloquence that the people could not refrain from bursting into acclamations of applause. Making no direct attack upon the Calvinists, he treated the question positively. He revealed to his audience the goodness and mercy of God, who answers the prayers of those invoking him, who wishes to save all his children, who makes salvation possible for all men of good will, who desires the loss of none, and finds his glory in pardoning those sinners who repent. After the sermon he venerated the miraculous host which had so marvellously survived the burning-down of the high altar of the church of Faverney during the preceding year. This was one of the most wonderful and most perfectly authenticated miracles of the time. When the high altar, with all its appurtenances, was completely destroyed by fire, a monstrance, containing two hosts, remained hanging in the air, without any visible support and absolutely undamaged, for the duration of thirty-three hours; and more than ten thousand people, drawn to the spot by the news of the prodigy, were witnesses of this miracle. At the end of the thirty-three hours, the monstrance slowly descended upon a corporal, which had been placed upon the ground to receive it. The matter was investigated in the most thorough and searching manner by the Archbishop of Besançon, who gave his official attestation to the authenticity of the miracle. One of these hosts was afterwards given to the town of Dôle, whither it was born in solemn procession accompanied by crowds of the faithful.*

From Dôle the Bishop journeyed to Besançon, where again he received an enthusiastic welcome from the people, who crowded around him to obtain his blessing or to touch with reverence the hem of his robes. As a favour to their illustrious visitor, the Canons of the cathedral chapter arranged a solemn exposition of the Holy Shroud of Besançon. After venerating this representation of Christ's Passion with great devotion, the Saint went up into the pulpit and preached an eloquent sermon on the words: "If I shall touch only the hem of his garment, I shall be cured." He was afterwards entertained at the Jesuit College, where the pupils went through a programme of recitations in his honour, after the style of the "academies" of our own days.*

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* C. A. de S., l. vii, p. 25 of vol. ii.

Francis then passed on to Baume-les-Dames, which was the ultimate destination of his journey. Here he found Mgr. Guillaume Reinck, Bishop of Bâle, who had been appointed by the Holy See as his fellow judge in the suit between the Spanish King and the clergy of Burgundy. Since the inception of this lawsuit Philip II had passed away, and his place in the legal proceedings was now taken by the Archduke Albert of Austria and Isabella, wife of that prince and daughter of the late King of Spain. It was presumably through her that the title of Count of Burgundy had passed from Philip to the Archduke. The clergy of Burgundy, who had a right to a share of the profits drawn from the salt-works of Salines, wished to surrender this right in exchange for an annual income, to be paid by the Archduke: the latter, on the other hand, was anxious to obtain full proprietary rights over the saline waters of the town, so as to avoid sharing with the clergy the profits of the working, about which sharing there was nearly always some kind of dispute. As all this was a matter of ecclesiastical property, the exchange could not be effected without the sanction of the Holy See, and it was for this reason that the two prelates had been delegated to watch over the interests of the Church and to make a lasting settlement of the affair. Francis spent the greater part of his day in listening to the representations of the lawyers of the two parties and in making a detailed examination of the documents placed before the court: the rest of his time was devoted to sermons in the churches, conferences in the religious houses, and interviews, in the confessional and elsewhere, with those who sought his advice with regard to their spiritual and temporal affairs. When he and his fellow-judge had thoroughly digested the details of their lawsuit and had given it full consideration, they were finally successful in coming to a decision which proved satisfactory to all parties. As a sign of gratitude, the Archduke presented Francis with a silver service for the furnishing of his chapel—cruets, candlesticks, ewer basin and bell: to these were added other pieces for his table in the dining-room of the episcopal residence.† At the same time the Archduke assured Francis of his goodwill and desire to help him in any way that should be possible, and while the Bishop never claimed the fulfilment of this promise for himself, it afterwards enabled him to gain protection for some nuns in the town of St Claude, who sought his help in the face of unjust opposition.

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* For an explanation of the numbers of Holy Shrouds and a discussion as to their genuineness see Fr. Thurston's article in the Catholic Encyclopdiæa.

† C. A. de S., l. vii, p. 27 *et seq.*, vol. ii.

The Burgundians and the people of Franche-Comté gave the Bishop of Geneva an enthusiastic welcome whenever he appeared in their midst. His passage amongst them partook of the nature of a triumph, and the crowds would greet him with the cry of "Long live our Bishop!" as if he had been their own prelate. During the proceedings of the lawsuit it was inevitable that a friendship should be formed between Francis and the Bishop of Bâle, and it was in consequence of this friendship that the Saint paid a visit to Porrentruy, and stayed at the house of Mgr. Reinck's mother. Relics of this visit are still preserved by the clergy of the parish—the armchair used by the Saint and the portrait which he afterwards sent to the Bishop of Bâle. It bears the legend: *Aetatis suae* 50, *anno* 1617.

On his return journey Francis once more passed through Salines, where he preached on the evening of his arrival and on the next day.* It was suggested to him that he might like to pay a visit to the salt-works, to see the process of manufacture, but the Saint had found work to do for the sake of souls, and he spent his time in an interview with a lady who desired his guidance and in giving an address to the nuns of St Elizabeth. Three months previously, the Syndics of Salines had invited Francis to preach the next Lenten Station, and he had accepted the invitation. Later on, he discovered that there had been opposition from certain quarters to this arrangement, and he found himself obliged to withdraw his acceptation by his constant desire to avoid being the cause of dissension. He never knew the reasons for this opposition. As a matter of fact, it arose from the contention of the Canons of St Anatoile that the Syndics of Salines did not possess the right to issue such an invitation, which was beyond their sphere. The Archbishop of Besançon supported the Canons in their contention—a policy to which he is supposed to have been all the more disposed because he was a partisan of the Spanish influence in Burgundy as opposed to the French, of which he regarded Francis de Sales as an agent. He was, of course, mistaken in his suspicion, for the Saint avoided politics as much as was possible.† In the meanwhile Francis was returning homewards, journeying by Nozeroy, Foncine le Haut, and St Claude.

On the Saint's arrival at Annecy he found further troubles awaiting him. Someone at the court of Charles Emmanuel—probably a courtier with a grudge against his family—had made use of the

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* Gonthier, Novembre 18, 1609.

† E.N., Tom XIV, Note to Lettre DLXXII, p. 245.

Bishop's interview with Baron de Lux and his journey to the province of Burgundy as a foundation of calumny in the ears of the Duke of Savoy, who was always very suspicious of French and Spanish influence. The rumour ran that France had designs upon Geneva, and that the Bishop had an understanding with that country for their execution; that France had sent him to the Protestant city in order to carry on negotiations with its chief citizens; that, while the city gates were closed, he had discussed the conditions of an agreement; and, in support of all this, it was alleged that otherwise the Bishop would hardly have ventured, without safe-conduct, without concealing his name, or without any disguising of his episcopal dress, to pass through a city, which was the sworn enemy of his name and his sacred character, and which had never been entered by any of his predecessors without a safe-conduct since the days of the first revolt against the faith.

The Bishop would have recked little of this calumny if Charles Emmanuel had paid no attention to it, but when he learned that it had succeeded in instilling a definite suspicion into the mind of the Duke, he was deeply concerned, and hastened to write to his prince, in refutation of the whole tissue of lies. It is interesting to note the vigour of the Saint's language, in contradistinction to his usual gentleness, on an occasion where strength and outspokenness were necessary.

"MONSEIGNEUR,

"Having been told by one of my friends that someone has slandered me in the hearing of Your Highness, as having carried on certain state intrigues against your service, I have experienced the very greatest astonishment thereat, not being able to imagine to myself the foundation on which it has been possible to build up such an imposture. For, although during the days past the duties of my office have necessitated my going to Gex and staying there for some time, yet neither there nor elsewhere have I occupied myself with doing or saying anything outside the province of my profession—preaching, holding disputations, reconciling churches, and administering the sacraments. Not only have I not carried on intrigues against Your Highness's service—which I have never done nor ever will do, by deed or thought—but, on the contrary, as far as the discretion and reverence due to my calling allowed me, I carefully noted all that I could imagine to be useful for your service, in order to inform you thereof, as I would have done by letter, if, on my return, I had not found Your Highness's command to communicate verbally with the Marquis de Lans. To him, indeed, I conveyed my information with all fidelity and openness, assuring him that all the rumours about the designs of the French upon Geneva were mere imaginations, which certain people had perhaps devised, in order to give an air of probability to the pretence of their service. . . . I humbly beg Your Highness to believe that my duty towards you is too deeply graven in my heart ever to allow me to fail so far as to do anything which would injure in any way the service of your affairs, and that I have too great a dislike for the worry of matters of state to have any intention of concerning myself therewith. And, consequently, I do not think there is a man in the world who talks about them with less pleasure and thinks of them with less attention than I, who, having quite enough other matters to attend to, belonging to my calling, never speak of these things unless provoked to do so, and never think of them except by way of involuntary distraction. . . ."*

In answer to this letter, the Duke, after further enquiries, acknowledged the untruthfulness of the accusations made against the Saint. If his own habit of thought had been less suspicious and deceitful, he would never have entertained these doubts for a moment. One cannot help contrasting his attitude towards Francis at this time with that of Henry IV during the Biron conspiracy, when similar accusations were levelled, with no real grounds but at any rate with more probability, against the bishop-elect of Geneva. Although the French King knew that the plot against his life had been engineered in great part from Savoy, he steadfastly refused to entertain the slightest suspicion against the prelate who came from that country.

Charles Emmanuel, having now ascertained the truth, wrote to Francis to say that his goodwill towards the Bishop was what it had been before, and to ask, in return, for the gift of the latter's friendship, on which the Duke set the highest value. Francis was the last man in the world to cherish rancour, but he would have been more than human if he had not felt hurt by these suspicions on the part of a prince whom he had always served, in all things honest, with unswerving devotion.

There were other rumours circulating at this time which gave the Saint occasion to exercise his patience. It was everywhere whispered that, in order to placate the Protestants, who could not endure his zeal and who were exasperated by the numerous conversions from Calvinism, Francis de Sales was about to be transferred to another diocese. This news was the cause of great anxiety to his friends and to those who were anxious for the welfare of the Church: to the opposite faction it naturally gave the greatest pleasure. As to Francis himself, completely indifferent as to whether he possessed a bishopric or not, he made no answer to these disturbing rumours but to say that, if he were separated from his present diocese, he would accept no other, quoting in support of this decision the words of the Apostle: "Art thou bound to a wife? seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not to be bound."*

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* This letter is not found in the Œuvres Complètes, but is given by Charles Auguste, l. vii, p. 51 of vol. ii.

The first months of the year 1610 saw a considerable change in the health of Mme. de Boisy. She herself, feeling that the end of her life was drawing near, had come to Annecy to pass a part of the winter in the immediate neighbourhood of her son, and to make a spiritual retreat under his guidance in preparation for death. She devoted to this purpose the space of a month, and during this time strove to sanctify her soul by fervent prayer, generous almsgiving, frequent communion, attendance at all the sermons and catechisms of her son, and finally a general confession to him of her whole life. After having finished her spiritual retreat, she withdrew to her château of Sales, where the settlement of certain business matters awaited her. As she was setting out for what proved to be her last journey, she said: "Never during my life have I had so much consolation as I have just received from him who is both my son and my father."

On Ash Wednesday, February 24, she visited the parish church of Thorens, where she went to confession and communion with great devotion, heard three Masses, and assisted at Vespers. On going to bed she found herself unable to sleep, and feeling the desire to keep her mind fixed on religious matters, desired her maid to read to her three chapters of her son's *Introduction to the Devout Life*, and, when this was ended, professed her intention of making the *Protestation* next morning. But God willed to take the intention for the act. That next morning, as she was occupied with her toilet, she was struck down by apoplexy, which left her half-paralyzed. The Baron de Thorens, her son, was immediately informed, and succeeded in bringing her back to a state of partial consciousness. But the words which she strove to utter were unintelligible, and she had lost all power of sight. On receiving news of his mother's condition, the Bishop at once took horse, and, accompanied by a physician and apothecary, made his way speedily to Sales. His mother recognized his voice, and feeling for his hand, gave him the greeting which is due to a Bishop: then, putting her arm around his neck, she drew his head down towards her and gave him her mother's kiss upon his lips. "This one," she said, "this one is both my son and my father." From that moment she gave up her mind solely and continuously to God, holding a crucifix in her hand, pressing it to her lips with reverence, making the sign of the cross over everything which they gave her to drink, and repeating the numerous acts of faith, hope, charity, and contrition suggested to her by the Saint. She lived thus for two days and a half; and then, after receiving Extreme Unction in a state of full consciousness, gave up her soul to God on the first day of March. Francis closed the eyes of his beloved mother with his own hands, blessed her and kissed her for the last time, and then gave free course to his tears.* Yet his grief, deep and full of the pain of loss as it was, held no element of bitterness, but was full of patience and resignation to the will of God. Her body was laid in the family vault within the parish church of Thorens, the Saint himself presiding over all the last rites.

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* Charles Auguste is the authority for this: but it does not seem to agree with the more perfect spirit of saintly indifference expressed in Francis's letters on this subject.

In a letter, written on March 11, to Baroness de Chantal, the Saint gives us an insight to the quality of the grief that afflicted his heart on the loss of his saintly mother. After making a confession of his resignation to the will of God, he continues: "And for myself, I confess, my daughter, that I experienced great grief at this separation (for this is the avowal I must make of my weakness, after having confessed to the goodness of God): but none the less, my daughter, it was a tranquil grief, even in its poignancy, for I said with David—'I am dumb, O Lord, and open not my mouth, because thou hast done it.' Doubtless, were it not for that, I should have cried out or given expression to discontent beneath the blows of that fatherly hand which truly, thanks to his goodness, I have learnt to love tenderly from my earliest days."†

It so happened that Mme. de Chantal herself had recently suffered deeply at the hand of death, for she had lost her little daughter, Charlotte. Alluding to this loss, the Saint wrote in the same letter: "Our poor little Charlotte is happy, indeed, to have quitted the earth before really coming in contact with it. And yet, alas! we cannot but weep over her somewhat, for is not our heart a human heart and our nature one that feels? Why not weep a little over our dead, since the Holy Spirit not only permits us, but even bids us so to do?"

A month after the funeral of Mme. de Boisy, Francis had the great consolation of receiving Mme. de Chantal at Annecy, whither the latter had come, as we shall see later on, in order to begin the foundation of the Visitation Order.

After holding the synod on April 28, 1610, Francis continued to occupy himself with his usual episcopal work, his writing of the *Treatise on the Love of God* and the beginnings of the Visitation. In the first half of May he paid visits to Vanchy, on the banks of the Rhône, and to Mélan, in Faucigny, where he gave the tonsure to several young men in the chapel of the Carthusian monastery. On returning from this last journey he learnt the news of the death of Henry IV of France, assassinated by the madman, Ravaillac, on May 14. The death of this great man was a cause of deep sorrow to the Saint. Francis de Sales, whilst fully cognizant of the faults of the French king, had always held him in admiration and affection since the days of his second visit to Paris, and his feelings towards the monarch were not only due to the remembrance of many personal kindnesses, but to a realization of the great qualities, the bravery, generosity, intelligence, and wise diplomacy, which had enabled Henry to create a united France out of the discordant factions left by the war. Francis, doubtless, considered that the king had not been sufficiently zealous for the Catholic cause, had at times been too sympathetic with the Huguenots, and had erred in the promulgation of the Edict of Nantes: for this would have been the opinion of most of the zealous Catholics of those days. But the Bishop's keen understanding of the events of history and of the characters of men must on reflection have made him realize that some such amnesty as the Edict of Nantes was a political necessity for the peace of France, and that a man of the stamp of Henry IV could scarcely be expected to turn upon his old associates, who had been so loyal to him in times of battle and intrigue. We have an authentic expression of the Saint's admiration for the dead king and of the thoughts which his untimely end inspired in a letter, written probably to President Frémiot, on May 27, 1610.

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* E.N., Tom. XIV, Lettre DLXXXI, p. 260 *et seq.*

† *Ibid.*

"Ah, my friend, it is true—Europe could scarcely have witnessed any more lamentable death than that of the great Henry IV. And who could help marvelling with you at the fickleness, vanity, and treachery of this world's greatness? This prince, having been so great in his birth, so great in warlike valour, so great in victories, so great in triumphs, so great in happiness, so great in peace, so great in renown, so great in every sort of greatness—who would not have said, speaking in all likelihood, that greatness was inseparably bound and linked with his life, and that, having sworn to him an inviolable fidelity, it would burst forth in a flame of applause from all men at his last moment, and find its consummation in a glorious death? Nay, certainly, sir, it would seem that so great a life could only find a fitting end in the midst of the spoils of the East after the final ruin of heresy and of Mohammedan rule. Those fifteen or eighteen years of vigorous life, which seemed promised to him by his strong constitution and health, as well as by the prayers of the whole of France and of many good folk outside of France, would have been sufficient for that end. And yet, behold, so great a succession of grandeurs ends in a death which has nought of greatness in it beyond being greatly mournful, lamentable, miserable and deplorable; behold him dead, he, whom one might judge to have been almost immortal, since he had not been able to find death in the midst of so many dangers, through the serried ranks of which he had pressed on towards the happy peace of these ten years; behold him now dead, fallen beneath the inglorious stroke of a little knife, at the hand of an unknown youth, in the midst of a street! . . ."

After a couple of paragraphs, in which he develops the moral to be drawn from the king's death, Francis continues:

"For the rest, the chief happiness of this great king, now dead, was that by which, becoming a child of the Church, he became the father of France; becoming a sheep of the great Shepherd, he became himself the shepherd of so many peoples; and converting his own heart to God, he converted the hearts of all good Catholics to himself. It is this happiness alone which gives me to hope that the gentle and merciful Providence of our heavenly Father will have secretly granted to that great royal heart, in the last moments of life, the contrition necessary for a happy death. Thus, then, I pray the Sovereign Goodness to be compassionate upon him who was compassionate upon so many; to pardon him who granted pardon to so many; and to receive into the reconciliation of the divine glory the soul of one who received so many into the reconciliation of his royal grace.

"For myself I must confess the favours of this great king in my regard seemed to me without limit, remembering what I was when, in the year 1502, he gave me invitations to remain in his kingdom—invitations powerful enough to have kept there, not only a poor priest, such as I was, but a very great prelate. But God was disposing otherwise. And I am exceedingly consoled by the fact that the king, having in his royal generosity once bestowed his favour upon me, continued to make me happy thereby with such great kindness and for so long a time—of the which innumerable instances of his graciousness, conferred on many occasions, have given me assurance. And although I have never for myself accepted of his kindness aught other than the pleasure of being in his good grace, yet do I hold myself to be most strictly bound to persevere in my feeble prayers for the good estate of his soul and for the welfare of his heirs."*

There is every reason for thinking that Henry's death did not take place before he received the succour of the sacraments. On the very day of his death he had been to Mass at the church of the Feuillants, and it had been noticed that he had recently shown more attention to his religious duties than he had formerly been used to do. We are told in the *Memoirs of Pontchartrain* that the king was brought to the Louvre immediately after the act of assassination and that there "he gave up his soul in the hands of the Archbishop of Embrun, having signified by signs with his eyes and hands his recourse to God to obtain pardon and to be received into the number of his elect."

Three weeks after the death of the French king Francis had the joy of inaugurating the Institution of the Visitation, a work he had

* E.N., Tom. XIV, p. 309.

desired and planned for a long time. We shall deal with this matter in a later chapter.

On June 8 Francis suffered once more at the hand of death. This time it was his old tutor, Canon Jean Déage, one of the Vicars-General of the diocese. This good and worthy man had always loved his pupil with an intense and honest, if somewhat tyrannical, devotion. Right up to the end he had watched over Francis with a jealous eye, and, disregarding the fact that his pupil was now a bishop, had corrected him for any imperfection that might be discerned in his conduct. To any but a saint this fearless candour might have been an embarrassment and a cause of vexation, for the old man's temper and tongue were as sharp as ever. But Francis appreciated the love from which these corrections proceeded. He was also probably aware that, while M. Déage would reprove him to his face, the old man would never permit a word to be said against him in his absence. The Bishop, on his part, treated M. Déage with all honour and thoughtfulness. Recognizing his sterling worth, he had appointed him Vicar-General, had given him a place in his house and at his table, and saw to it that nothing was wanting of those few small comforts of life which the old man's rigid austerity permitted. During M. Déage's last illness the Bishop waited upon him with a service full of love: and after his death gave orders that every honour should be paid him at his funeral, officiated thereat himself, and provided that a large number of masses should be said throughout the diocese for the repose of his soul. It is related that on the first occasion when the Bishop offered up a Requiem mass for this intention he was completely overcome by his grief. When he came to the *Pater Noster* he found himself obliged to stop, rendered voiceless by his sorrow, and even when he was able to go on with the ritual, he was unable to restrain his tears. He later on explained to his chaplain that, when he came to the Lord's Prayer, he was suddenly reminded that it was M. Déage himself who had first taught him to say the *Pater Noster* in the days of his childhood.*

In the meanwhile there occurred another event which entailed considerable loss to the Saint. This was the appointment of Antoine Favre to the first Presidency of the Senate of Chambéry by order of the Duke of Savoy. For some years Favre, as President of the Council of Annecy, had lived in that town, and the Bishop had rejoiced in the society and help of his old friend. The new appointment meant, however, that henceforth Antoine Favre would have to take up his residence at Chambéry. Gratified, as he must have been, by his appointment to so high an honour, the first President was deeply grieved to part from the saintly Bishop, whom he always alluded to as his brother. Moreover, once he had taken up his new duties, he found himself occupied with a series of delicate negotiations and responsible transactions that made his administration of affairs an almost overwhelming anxiety. He had, indeed, as full a share of the Duke's confidence as was accorded to anyone, and was in daily correspondence with that prince, but the task of retaining the ducal favour, and of satisfying the demands of such a restless master, must have been a continual strain upon his powers. His work was made all the more difficult by jealousy on the part of certain members of the Senate and by the ruffling conduct of some of the more unruly noblemen. One of these gentlemen, by way of a hint, used to boast that he was descended from a seigneur who had not hesitated to behead a former President of the Council of Justice.* It was in reference to these troubles that M. Favre wrote the following letter to the Saint:

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* *Esprit*, Part V, Sect. 22.

"My dear Brother,

"Every day do I say to God—'It is good for me that thou hast humbled me, that I may learn thy justifications.' My heart rejoices in our divine Saviour in that, by means of the persecution and contempt of the people of this country, I have occasion to combat the vainglory which might be suggested to my mind by the applause bestowed upon me on account of my books and my reputation. Elsewhere people say that it is a great favour to obtain there a glimpse of the great Antoine Favre: here the folk would consider it a piece of good fortune if they could get rid of the wretch. And with regard to all this, my dear brother, I repeat after you in perfect tranquillity—'We are but what we are before God,' in whose eyes I am neither made greater by the praise of the absent nor lessened by the contempt of those around me. Let us, then, be indifferent to both, walking before God in holiness and justice."†

As a last gage of his friendship for Francis de Sales, the President, on leaving Annecy, made over to the Bishop the very fine house which he had bought and occupied within that town. Up to this time the Saint had continued to live in a hired dwelling: now he was put into possession of a mansion more suitable for the work and functions of his state. But even here he continued to exercise his pet virtue of simplicity. For his own private use he chose a small and restricted apartment, alleging as his reason that, after living the day in the spacious rooms of his new palace like a great personage, it was necessary to remind himself at night, by the sight of his narrow quarters and small bed, that he was only a poor and miserable man. "In this way," he said, "the Bishop of Geneva will be in his right place during the day, and Francis de Sales in his during the night."

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* Mugnier's *Histoire du Président Favre*, chap. xviii, p. 379.

† Hamon gives no reference for this letter, nor could I find it in Mugnier.

Towards the end of the month of June (1610) Francis received a visit from the Bishop of Belley, who thus came to thank his friend for presiding at his consecration. This was the first of a number of visits interchanged yearly, almost without exception, between the two friends.* "We used to visit each other every year reciprocally," says the Bishop of Belley, "and each visit would last a whole week without counting the days of arrival and departure."† It need scarcely be said that much of the time was spent in religious exercises, and that much of their intercourse was on spiritual matters. These visits did a great deal towards modifying the exaggerations of the younger prelate's character, the genuine worth of which was realized by Francis de Sales in spite of certain external faults. Many times did he give to his young friend lessons drawn from the stores of his mature wisdom, of his deep learning and of his practical piety, and it is to these continual intercourses that we owe the possession of the *Spirit of St Francis de Sales*, written by Mgr. Camus.

Francis was a past master in the art of giving lessons. He was appreciative of the sensibilities of others, gentle in his corrections, and never tactless in his choice of opportunities. One of his greatest tasks, as we have said, was to impress upon Mgr. Camus the value of moderation. Thus, the latter, in the beginning of his episcopate, was inclined to rush at certain desirable reforms with all the ardour and intensity of youth. "Go gently to work and hasten slowly," was the Saint's suggestion. "Often enough we do no good at all because we try to do too much good all at once. We must do everything little by little and gain ground foot by foot." Now the Bishop of Belley, being quick-tempered by nature, was inclined to reprehend with a somewhat harsh and bitter zeal all those whom he considered worthy of blame. In order to correct this disposition, Francis reminded him that "the truth which is not charitable comes from charity that is not true."‡ "We must never correct anyone," added the Saint, "out of a spirit of personal vexation, but solely out of a spirit of charity. Now, if the correction is motived by charity, we can recognize it by two marks: the first is that the truth is told to our neighbour simply for the love of God and for the good of that neighbour; the second is that the truth is told in a spirit of gentleness, oil being mingled with the wine, as was done by the charitable Samaritan, when he dressed the injuries of the wounded traveller.

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* The following pages consist mainly of quotations, gathered by M. Hamon from the Bishop of Belley's *Esprit*. Here and there I have been unable to find therein the exact words quoted. One or two of the references given in Hamon are wrong.

† "Mgr. Camus, unless we are mistaken, exaggerates the number of the visits." Note to the 1922 edition of Hamon.

‡ *Esprit*, Part I, Sect. 1.

A reprimand is bitter of its very nature: made up with gentleness and warmed with the fire of charity, it becomes quite heartening and quite likeable.* Every man who strives to teach others the way to virtue must be prepared to suffer their injustice and to accept their ingratitude as a reward."† "In our spiritual government," he would say again, "we must not evince an absolute and domineering spirit: the human will is not forced. You must gain it by gentle persuasion, you must knock gently at the door of men's hearts, you must gently force them to open. If you are successful, you effect a happy cure: if you are rejected, then with gentleness must your rejection be received. In the royal galley of divine love, there is no convict labour: all the oarsmen are volunteers.‡ God endures resistance to his inspirations, and does not cease those inspirations on that account in spite of the rejection of his call. Our guardian angels do the same, and do not abandon us, even though we, on our side, abandon God. These must be our models."

Mgr. Camus had at one time considered that, as he was a bishop, it was fitting that he should dispense himself from the arduous task of hearing confessions. Francis de Sales reproved him for this resolution: he accepted the reproof, appointed a confessional for his use, and immediately found himself besieged by penitents. It seems that the work was not to his liking. "Really," he wrote to his friend, "by your insisting on making me a confessor, you have made of me a martyr: I can keep to it no longer." "Have you ever," answered Francis, "seen vintager or reaper complain that the vintage or the harvest was too abundant? What a happiness for you that God should deign to make use of your ministrations, to deliver so many poor souls from the death of sin and to bring them back to the grace of life! I see well enough, however, that you want me to sympathize with you and to soothe your complaint. I will admit, then, that just as we call martyrs those who confess God before men, so also we can call martyrs those who confess men before God. But take courage, hold fast to this cross, and persevere therein to the end."§

Mgr. Camus was fonder of the pulpit than of the confessional, but his sermons were not always such as met with the Saint's approval. The latter felt constrained to advise him to make a more sober use of the riches of his imagination and of his flowers of rhetoric, and, instead of devoting himself to grand sermons, to make a preference of catechetical instructions, subjects of meditation and retreats. "I am afraid," said the Saint, "lest your flowers fail to bring forth fruit: it is time to prune your vine, to free your speech from its useless ornaments—*the time of pruning is come.* Although it is laudable to use the vessels of Egypt for the decoration of the tabernacle, this should none the less be done with moderation and restraint."*

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* *Ibid.*, Sect. 3.

† *Ibid.*, Sect. 4.

‡ *Ibid.*, Part VII, Sect. 11.

§ *Ibid.*, Part I, Sect. 22.

"One day," relates the Bishop of Belley, "I was invited to preach in the church of the Visitation, and, knowing that the Saint would be present together with a large congregation, I prepared the most polished discourse that I could. That evening, when we were alone together, he said: 'Well, you pleased our people mightily to-day: they went off from your sermon saying all manner of wonderful things about it. I only know of one who was not satisfied.' 'I should like to know,' I replied, 'what I may have said that could have shocked the mind of that person. As to his name, that matters but little: I have no desire to learn it.' 'But I,' rejoined Francis, 'have a great desire to tell it to you.' 'Who is it, then?' 'If I had no confidence in you, I would not name him; but as I know you well, I will do it willingly. Do you see him here anywhere?' I looked around the room, and, seeing no one but himself, I said—'It is you yourself, then?' 'It is I myself,' he rejoined. 'That,' I answered, 'is certainly a very great damper for my triumph: I would rather have had your approval by itself than that of a whole province. But, thank God, I have fallen into friendly hands, which only cause pain in order to cure.' 'I love you too much,' he said, 'to pardon you and flatter you. If you had shown the same affection for our Sisters, you would not have occupied yourself in increasing their vanity instead of edifying them, in praising them instead of teaching them. We ought never to go up into the pulpit without having a definite plan for building up some corner of the walls of Jerusalem, that is to say, of teaching the practice of some virtue or the avoiding of some vice.' 'But what sort of conversion could I have possibly preached to such saintly souls?' 'You are canonizing the living too easily: you must teach your hearers to humble themselves instead of tempting them to presumption and vanity.'†

"The next day," continues the Bishop of Belley, "the Saint made me preach in the chapel of the Poor Clares: and, leaving my rhetoric on one side, in order to aim at edification only, I spoke with great simplicity of language and thought, proceeding methodically and following my subject closely. On returning home, the Saint came to see me in my room, which was really his own, for, when I visited him, he always used to put me in his own place: embracing me affectionately, he said, 'Truly, I loved you well yesterday, but to-day I love you much more. You are a man after my own heart, and, unless I am mistaken, after God's heart too. Your audience was saying: *The days pass and bear no resemblance to each other*, and they were not as well pleased as yesterday; but he who was not satisfied yesterday is extraordinarily pleased to-day. Always follow the same method, and God will make your labours successful—you will have gained the art of making saints.* And what do we need to know, save only Jesus and Jesus crucified? . . . Take little notice of all the remarks of the public upon your sermons . . . . If you are going to heed the varying judgements of men, you will never have done with it all: it will be like Penelope's web, always beginning again. Answer all of them with kind and gentle words, and then go your way, following your own bent, instead of changing it in accordance with the criticisms of this, that, and the other. Take heed of God only, and give yourself up to his grace.'†

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* *Ibid.*, Part II, Sect. 19.

† *Ibid.*, Sect. 10.

"The Saint," continues Mgr. Camus, "especially recommended me always to begin by practising what I intended to preach, 'because,' he used to say, 'he whose tongue is longer than his arm is a monster,' and he was so penetrated with the truth of this principle that, when anyone was praising some preacher or other in his presence, he would immediately ask: 'In what virtue does he excel? in humility, gentleness, mortification?'‡

"Finally, after having thus censured my faults, the Saint would add: 'I want you to be very grateful to me for all this: for it is the strongest proof of friendship that I can give you. And if you would do me a corresponding favour by correcting me in my turn, I would recognize in that the strength of your friendship, but in this direction I only notice in you a certain reluctance. You are too circumspect: love goes straight forward and without so much reflection. Because I have a great love for you, I cannot endure the slightest imperfection in you: flies in anyone else, whom I love less, become elephants in you, whom I love so much.' "§

Along with these corrections Francis de Sales would suggest thoughts of encouragement and consolation, especially at those moments when the Bishop of Belley allowed himself to be troubled by scruples and by fear of his great responsibility. Mgr. Camus used sometimes to worry himself with the thought that he had been consecrated before attaining the canonical age for the episcopate—and this, in spite of the fact that the proper dispensation had been received from the very authority which had framed the regulation as to the age of the candidates for Orders. "By consecrating me thus you were guilty of a sin," is the accusation against the Saint which Mgr. Camus puts into his own mouth. "'Yes,' answered Francis, 'I did commit that sin, and I am afraid that God will not pardon me for it: for I find that I cannot make an act of contrition about it. But I beg you to live in such a manner as never to give me reason to repent of my action. I have never consecrated anyone but you: you are the only one—the work of my apprenticeship and my masterpiece together. Take courage: God will help us.* Instead of looking backwards, and seeking out anxieties in the past, let us look forward with a view to becoming better in the future.' 'But,' I would say to him, 'I cannot think of the weight of the episcopal office without trembling.' 'And what would you do then,' he answered, 'if you had a diocese like mine,† the sink of every error possible?' 'But in the midst of all these heresies you have such numbers of good souls who are your joy and your crown!' 'And you also,' he rejoined, 'you have the same blessing. It is not good to say: My neighbour's harvests are always more abundant than mine and his herds more plentiful. We must bless God for the one and not be ungrateful for the other. After all, it is true that the pastoral office would be overwhelming if we had to bear it by ourselves alone. But our Lord carries a part of this yoke such as really makes up the whole of it, for he carries us ourselves along with our burden.‡ That is why we must serve him in trembling, but without ceasing to be glad and to be of good heart. The humility which discourages is bad.' 'But what frightens me,' I told him, 'is the risk of losing my innocence by contact with the world.' 'In that matter,' he answered, 'we must distinguish between private individuals and those who bear office. The former must give their charity into the keeping of their chastity and be very reserved; because if they take risks without lawful cause, they will experience the truth of the saying: Who loves danger, will perish thereby. The latter, on the contrary, must give their chastity into the keeping of their charity, and may reckon that, if they only expose themselves to dangers inseparable from their calling, they will be helped by grace to avoid a fall.'"§

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* *Ibid.*, Sect. 11.

† *Ibid.*, Sect. 9.

‡ The Saint was very insistent upon this point, as can be seen from his letter to the Archbishop of Bourges. But it is a difficult matter, and one side of it must not be pushed too far. A man should certainly try to practise what he preaches: nevertheless, a Catholic preacher does not go up into the pulpit because he is conscious of possessing certain virtues, but because he has received a mission to preach from his superiors, who represent the Church. It is only in his *official* character, not as a private individual, that he dares to speak at all.

§ *Ibid.*, Part I, Sect. 9.

In spite of this wise advice, the Bishop of Belley was thinking of resigning his post: the great responsibility frightened him, and the work of looking after his neighbour seemed to him an obstacle in the pursuit of his own salvation. "I am like a torch," he said, "which is burnt out itself while giving light to others: and the time I spend on the salvation of my neighbour deprives me of the leisure to think of my own."‖ In order to appease the young Bishop's conscience,

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* *Ibid.*, Part I, Sect. 12.

† *Ibid.*, Part XV, Sect. 15.

‡ *Ibid.*, Part VII, Sect. 5.

§ *Ibid.*, Part I, Sect. 5

‖ *Ibid.*, Part VII, Sect. 5.

Francis reminded him of the saying of St Augustine—that if the love of truth longs for sacred repose in which to enjoy that truth at leisure, true charity devotes itself to the work of communicating it to others: *Otium sanctum diligit charitas veritatis, negotium justum suscipit veritas charitatis.* "The part of the contemplative Mary is beautiful," he would add, "but it is only for extraordinary vocations or for those who, having worn out their strength in the service of souls, have nought in front of them but to prepare for death.* You are gaining your salvation by procuring that of others; for that is your vocation. There are not as many saints in any order as there are in the order of bishops. Remain, therefore, aboard that ship on which God has placed you for your journey through life: the passage is so short that the trouble of changing vessels is not worth while. . . .† If you leave your Church to seek rest, perhaps God will allow your pretended tranquillity to be disturbed by a thousand interior and exterior troubles. God hates the peace of those who are destined for war: he is the God of battles just as much as he is the God of peace.'"

The two friends would spend their time of recreation in walking about the Bishop's garden, in consulting the library, or in visiting the Carthusian house of the neighbourhood: and all through their various occupations Francis would draw profitable lessons from the treasures of his heart and mind. Thus he would impress upon his friend the absolute necessity of combining distrust of oneself with confidence in God. "The one without the other," he would say, "only begets vexation, discouragement, and cowardice; the two together are cheerful and courageous, giving us the hardihood to say with the Apostle—'It will not be I who will act, but the grace of God within me.'"

He also pointed out to Mgr. Camus the worthlessness of public opinion, which is so frequently a cause of discouragement. "So many people," he said, "offer sacrifice to the idol of reputation. What is it, after all, but a shadow, a smoke, a praise, that perishes as quickly as sound, an esteem so often false that many are astonished at being praised for virtues which they do not possess, and blamed for defects which have never been theirs? Those who complain of slanders are sensitive indeed. . . . Was ever reputation torn like that of Jesus Christ? Who ever received so many insults as the Apostles and martyrs? All our sufferings, looked at through the cross of Jesus Christ, disappear like stars in the presence of the sun, and patience changes all our evils into good. . . ."‡

Once, when the two were in the library, Francis came across a work which was very learned but by no means clear in exposition. In allusion to this fact a witty reader had written on the first page the words, *Fiat lux*—"Let there be light." "The inscription is very apposite," remarked the Bishop of Geneva. "The author has given several books to the public, but in not one of them is there any light. It is a great pity that one so learned is ignorant of the art of expressing himself."*

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* *Ibid.*, Part IV, Sect. 10. † *Ibid.*, Part VII, Sect. 5.

‡ The reference to *Esprit*, Part XV, Sect. 28, given by Hamon, seems to me unsatisfactory

On another occasion the Bishop of Belley suggested Seneca as a philosopher whose maxims greatly resembled those of the Gospel. "As to the letter," answered his companion, "perhaps so. As to the spirit, in no way. For the spirit of the Gospel only aims at stripping us of ourselves in order to put on Jesus Christ; it only strives to make us renounce ourselves, in order to make us carry the cross: this philosopher, on the contrary, is always calling us back to ourselves, and makes his wise man a proud being who finds complacency in his own excellence. The wise man of the Gospel is small in his own eyes and esteems himself in no way: the wise man of Seneca imagines himself superior to all, and looks upon himself as the workman of his own fortune and the master of the universe."†

One day, when the friends had been visiting a Carthusian hermitage, Mgr. Camus expressed his envy of its calm and innocent solitude. "Solitude is good," answered Francis, "when God calls us to it: otherwise it is bad. People imagine that it affords less opportunity for sin, but man bears his own nature with him always, and his disposition to evil clings as closely to him as his shadow. A number of people make the mistake of imagining that they possess a certain virtue, because they are not afflicted with its opposite vice: it is a beginning of wisdom not to be mad; but it is so small a beginning that it can hardly be called wisdom itself. Abstaining from evil is but the foundation on which it still remains to erect the building. Finally, there are a number of virtues which cannot be practised in the state of solitude: how can he learn obedience who is given no command, or patience who is never contradicted, or constancy who has nothing to suffer, or humility who has no superior? . . ."‡ "Nevertheless," said Mgr. Camus, "think of the merits amassed by this good Carthusian!" "But think also," replied the Saint, "of the merits which we ourselves can acquire by the least of our actions. The opportunity of earning immense sums does not come every day, but every day we can earn a few farthings and halfpennies. And these little profits, well invested, in course of time produce great fortunes. In this way we pile up great treasures in heaven, if we take advantage of the little opportunities that we meet with every moment. A little act of virtue, accomplished with a great love of

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* *Ibid.*, Part III, Sect. 11.

† *Ibid.*, Part XVI, Sect. 17 and Part IV, Sect. 15.

‡ *Ibid.*, Part II, Sect. 8.

God, is more excellent and more meritorious than some sublime deed performed with less love. People are making a mistake when they attach little value to a small act of surrender to the bad humour of another; to the gentle endurance of other people's faults, of an insulting look, of preference shown to another, of contempt or importunity; to a kind answer in the case of an unjust or harsh reproach; to the patient acceptance of a refusal; to some good action which seems, perhaps, to be beneath our station in life; or to the showing of kindness to our servants—all these things are small in the eyes of the world, which appreciates only lofty and dramatic virtue: but they are great in the eyes of God."*

Returning to the house, the Saint would sometimes watch the others beguiling their recreation time with some harmless game. At these times he could not endure anything like cheating or sharp practice. Once, on a different occasion, when someone urged as excuse for such practices that he was only playing for farthings, Francis rejoined: "And what would it be if you were playing for gold pieces? He who is afraid to take a pin will not steal a crown piece. Perfect fidelity to God consists in abstaining from the slightest faults out of love for him. Great sins in themselves inspire so much horror that it is easy to avoid them: it is by fidelity in avoiding small faults that we show our love."†

At times Francis would pour forth his heart with greater intimacy into the ears of his friend. "Oh, if you only knew," he would say, "how God treats my heart! You would thank his goodness for it all, and would beg of him to give me the spirit of counsel and of fortitude to carry out the inspirations of wisdom and understanding with which he favours me. How good is the God of Israel to those who are upright of heart, since he is so good to those whose hearts are as mean as mine, so little attentive to his graces and so bent upon the earth! Sometimes I tremble with the fear that God is giving me my paradise in this world: I do not really know what adversity is; I have never seen the face of poverty. God knows well my weakness—to treat me thus as a child. When will he grant that, after receiving so many favours, I may sigh a little beneath the cross, since, in order to reign with him, we must also suffer with him?"‡ Mgr. Camus relates that while he listened to these words, he felt, like the disciples of Emmaus, that his heart was enkindled with the burning love of God.

* *Ibid.*, Part III, Sect. 21.
† *Ibid.*, Part VIII, Sect. 4.
‡ *Ibid.*, Part X, Sect. 31

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